

Zaire government rejects rebel truce

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire said on Friday it did not recognise a ceasefire called by rebels holding a large slice of the country's eastern provinces. Interior Minister Kamanda W. Kamanda told Reuters that Zaire saw neighbouring Rwanda as the aggressor in the east and Kinshasa would continue to do all it could to recover lost territory. "We do not recognise this ceasefire. In this war we believe that the other side is the government of Rwanda and those who are supporting Rwanda so we shall do everything in our means to recover our territory," he said, speaking in English. "As far as the government is concerned there are no negotiations to be envisaged with those who have attacked our country," he added (see related story on page 5).

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Jordan, Israel have 'serious differences' over settlements

Muasher, in talks with Netanyahu, reiterates Jordan's rejection of Israeli policy, says peace process in danger

Information minister returns after four-day visit to Israel

AMMAN (Agencies) — Serious differences have arisen between Jordan and Israel over a planned expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Information Minister Marwan Muasher said Friday after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"I have clarified the Jordanian position regarding the settlements and stressed that this constituted a threat to the peace process," Dr. Muasher told Jordan Radio.

"There are big differences between the Jordanian and Israeli perspectives on the issue of settlements," Dr. Muasher said after his meeting with Mr. Netanyahu in West Jerusalem.

Dr. Muasher returned home Friday after a four-day visit to Israel.

Dr. Muasher's remarks coincided with an Israeli government decision Friday to give tax breaks and generous grants to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The decision will likely boost construction and investment in the 144 settlements. The Palestinians

have sharply opposed settlement expansion and warned it would lead to the collapse of Mideast peace efforts.

Dr. Muasher told Israel TV Thursday that Jordan was committed to working with Israel "to protect the achievements" of peace, but warned that Mr. Netanyahu's policies were endangering them.

"There are certain policies of the (Israeli) government that are posing great dangers," he said.

Dr. Muasher, who was Jordan's first ambassador to Israel following the Kingdom's 1994 peace treaty with the Jewish state, cited the settlement expansion plans and the delays in implementing the Israel-Palestinian accords in particular.

Talks between Israel and the Palestinians on Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron are deadlocked.

Dr. Muasher Friday said he explained Jordan's position towards Israeli settlements and reiterated Jordan's views on the Israeli settlement activity. He said the construction of new set-

tlements in Ras Al Amud area in Jerusalem, and an imminent Israeli cabinet decision to provide additional facilities to the settlement activity, pose a threat to the Arab-Israeli peace process.

On his meetings with Israeli officials, Dr. Muasher said he stressed Jordan's keen interest and desire to work with all peace-loving forces to push the peace process forward, and to block all attempts to abort the peace process.

A statement issued by Mr. Netanyahu's office said the prime minister assured Dr. Muasher that Israel was still committed to the Middle East peace process.

"The Israeli government remains committed in the peace process with the Palestinians and respects the peace treaty signed with Jordan," the statement said.

"Israel is conscious of Jordan's need for stability and prosperity," Mr. Netanyahu told Dr. Muasher, according to the statement from his office.

Dr. Muasher told opposition Labour parliamentarians on Thursday: "It is forbidden to take the peace

treaty with Jordan for granted," according to Israel's Haim news agency.

During his visit, Dr. Muasher also discussed the stalled peace process with the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini, at his home on Friday, Palestinian sources said.

In a meeting on Wednesday with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, Dr. Muasher criticised settlement activity in Palestinian areas, saying Jordan was opposed to all construction of Jewish homes in the territories and East Jerusalem.

Dr. Muasher was asked on Israel Channel Two television what he expected to say to Mr. Netanyahu when he met him on Friday.

"I will tell him that we want to work with the Israeli government in order to protect the achievements. But I will also tell him that there are certain policies of the government that are causing great danger," he replied.

"The peace situation is certainly in a great crisis,"

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Barzani met Saddam in Baghdad

DUBAI (AFP) — Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), met President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad last week, the Iraqi opposition said Friday. The Iraqi National Congress (INC) said the meeting took place Wednesday and that Mr. Barzani visited Baghdad with two of his brothers, Sidiq and Wajeeh, as well as his security chief Karim Sinjari. President Saddam's son Qusai, who is in charge of the president's personal security, also attended the talks and the Kurdish delegation returned to Salahuddin in Kurdish-held north Iraq on Thursday, the INC said in a statement received here. There was no confirmation of the report from the KDP, which has controlled northern Iraq together with the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in defiance of Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war. President Saddam's forces intervened in northern Iraq at the end of August to help the KDP expel the PUK from the main Kurdish town of Erbil. On Wednesday,



PROTESTS IN KARACHI: An activist of a militant faction spreads burning tyres across the road in central Karachi on Friday. About 250 activists of the Sunni Tehrik (movement) launched their action in a commercial district to protest against the inclusion of a member of the Ahmadi religious sect in the Sindh provincial government. Angry young activists threw stones at the police and smashed about a dozen cars parked nearby but no one was injured (Reuters photo)

Israeli government decides to give more incentives to settlers

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — In a defiant move, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet decided Friday to give tax breaks and generous grants to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel Radio reports said.

The decision — made at a time when Israel's relations with the Palestinians are already at their tensest — means Israel will pump hundreds of millions of dollars into the settlements.

The United States has said settlement construction hurts Mideast peace efforts. The Palestinians have warned that massive settlement expansion could provoke more violence.

The cabinet decision came two days after suspected Palestinians killed a Jewish settler and her 12-year-old son in a West Bank drive-by shooting. Settler leaders said Mr. Netanyahu apparently was using the anger in Israel over the attack to move ahead with the controversial plan to give more money to the settlements.

In Friday's session, the cabinet decided to assign the settlements an "A" priority status, making it more attractive for Israelis to move to the West Bank and Gaza.

With "A" priority status, settlers will have to pay less income tax and business

people will receive government grants equaling at least 20 per cent of their investment.

Israel Radio reports said cabinet ministers engaged in a heated argument over where the money should come from to pay for the tax cuts and grants. Only last week, the cabinet had voted to cut an additional \$600 million from the 1997 budget to help cut a growing deficit.

The radio reports said the cabinet was to decide on the funding later.

The decision was sharply criticised by Israel's dovish opposition.

"I don't know where the government is going to find the money when it is carrying out such large-scale and painful budget cuts," said Avraham Shohat, who was finance minister in Israel's previous government.

"Now they have taken a decision which means pumping hundreds of millions of shekels to the settlements,"

Moshe Shahal, a former police minister, warned the new boost to settlements would send relations with the Arab World and the Palestinians into a fast downward spin. "It means confrontation and a return to the cycle of violence," Mr. Shahal said.

The settlements had "A" priority under the 1990-

1992 'hardline government of Yitzhak Shamir. When Yitzhak Rabin came to power in the summer of 1992, he revoked the special status, except for several settlements in the area around Jerusalem. At the same time, he curbed settlement construction to help pave the way for peace talks with the Palestinians.

About 145,000 settlers live in the West Bank and Gaza, amid two million Palestinians.

Mr. Netanyahu declared at the funeral on Thursday of two Jewish settlers killed by Palestinian gunmen near Ramallah in the West Bank that he would strengthen settlements despite Arab and international protests.

Education Minister Zvulun Hammer of the National Religious Party said earlier approval of the financial incentives by the Likud-led government elected last May would be the proper answer to Wednesday's drive-by attack.

"This is an internal reaction showing that settlement activity, as the government has already declared, will be developed," he told Israel Radio.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said in Gaza on Thursday the addition of

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Annan to be next U.N. chief

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Kofi Annan of Ghana is certain of being elected the next U.N. chief after France on Friday lifted its objections to the candidacy of the U.N. under-secretary-general for peacekeeping, diplomats said.

British Ambassador John Weston told journalists here that "we have consensus in the council to recommend to the next General Assembly that the next secretary-general should be Mr. Kofi Annan," the U.N. under secretary-general in charge of peacekeeping.

"This is good result for Africa and for the U.N. organisation," Mr. Weston added.

The news came after the 15-member Security Council held a further round of informal "straw polls" on the next U.N. chief.

Until Thursday, when the vote was an unassailable 14-1 in favour of Mr. Annan, France had held out against Mr. Annan for apparently politico-linguistic reasons after stating its preference for candidates from a francophone African country (see page 5).

The Security Council recommends its selection of U.N. chief to the 185-member General Assembly for election. A formal vote in the council which would confirm the "straw poll" result was expected to be held later, although no

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Arafat to visit Rome

ROME (AFP) — Yasser Arafat will travel to Rome next Thursday to inaugurate an exhibition on the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, the Palestinian embassy said here.

Entitled Bethlehem 2,000, the exhibition covers projects to restore religious and historic monuments in the old town of Bethlehem in time to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ. According to Nemer Hammad, head of the Palestinian delegation in Rome, Mr. Arafat will also attend a concert for peace.

Mr. Arafat last visited Italy in September when he met Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro and Prime Minister Romano Prodi.

De Charette to meet Christopher in U.S.

PARIS (AFP) — Foreign Minister Hervé De Charette, at the heart of a row over an alleged snub to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, is to meet his U.S. counterpart in Washington Monday, a spokesman said seeking to play down the spat.

Mr. De Charette, accused of walking out during an official toast to mark Mr. Christopher's retirement in Brussels (see page 5), is due to meet Mr. Christopher during a visit as head of a delegation of "Friends of Lebanon," a group devoted to rebuilding the war-shattered country.

Germany to send troops to Bosnia

BONN (AFP) — The German parliament voted overwhelmingly Friday to send some 3,000 soldiers for the new peace stabilisation force in Bosnia. Deputies approved the government plan by 499 votes to 93 in the Bundestag, meaning that most social democrat opposition members backed the ruling Christian Union and Free Democrat parties. There were reservations among Green Party members, however. This will be the first time that German combat troops are stationed in Bosnia itself.

Uday Hussein 'recovering'; hunt is on for his assailants

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Uday Hussein, the eldest son of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, is recovering in a Baghdad hospital after he was shot and wounded while driving through the capital, official sources said Friday.

Security forces meanwhile hunted for the gunmen who shot and wounded Uday.

"After escaping a cowardly attack (on Thursday), Uday's health is no cause for concern," the official Al Iraq newspaper said.

Al Thawra, newspaper of the ruling Baath Party, also said that Uday's life is not in danger.

"We are wishing for a quick recovery of Uday Saddam Hussein, victim of a cowardly attack," Al Thawra said, quoting a statement from a presidential spokesman.

Youth Television, which is run by Uday Hussein himself, said Uday suffered "bullet wounds," the



Uday Hussein

spokesman said.

The official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said Uday "was slightly injured."

The presidential spokesman said an investigation had been launched into this "odious crime."

Although Youth TV spoke of a shooting, neither the presidential spokesman nor INA made any mention of how Uday was attacked nor his assailants.

The motive for the attack was not immediately known, but Uday is regarded as a flamboyant and influential figure in Iraq's complex, clan politics with plenty of potential rivals — political, business and personal.

While Uday, a tall man with a neat black beard, holds no official state posts, he controls a media network and commercial empire.

His formal roles include heading Iraq's Youth radio

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Jordanians divided over separation of executive and legislative authorities

This is the second part of a two-part article on the ongoing debate in Jordan over whether to exclude Parliament members from the executive authority. The first part appeared in the Dec. 11 issue of the Jordan Times

By Farida Salfiti
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians are divided on the viability of introducing a separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches of government which would exclude parliamentarians from the Council of Ministers.

The debate over the issue intensified after His Majesty King Hussein said in his Speech from the Throne to Parliament on Nov. 19 that a review of the current practice of includ-

ing members of parliament in the cabinet is needed. But this debate has thus far failed to bridge the gap between the opponents and proponents of the idea.

Those who support a separation of powers say it would lead to a more effective government and opponents argue that the perceived inefficiency of the current system is caused by abuse of the principle and does not reflect a deficiency in it. They say that it is too soon to judge the young democratic experiment of Jordan, insisting that no

changes should be introduced.

Proponents of the separation of powers believe it is necessary to enhance the system of checks and balances and to render parliament more capable of performing its role as a watchdog on the executive.

Islamist Deputy Hamam Sa'id said the watchdog role of Parliament had been compromised by the participation of deputies in the government. Those who hold both positions, he said, automatically endorse the government line, rarely challenging its policies and decisions.

This, Dr. Sa'id told a local daily recently, "means that the deputies are not ful-

filling the role assigned to them."

Dr. Sa'id's views are echoed by centrist Deputy Farah Al Rabadi, who believes "a deputy-minister cannot debate in Parliament as a deputy should, and therefore the effectiveness of parliament is undermined and weakened."

Dr. Rabadi's opposition to the inclusion of deputies in the government also stems from his belief that if a politician holds legislative and executive posts simultaneously, he would be prone to bias in drafting laws. Dr. Rabadi says that a large presence of deputies in government would

ensure the executive the necessary support to pass legislation in the form it wants.

But former minister and current member of the Upper House Ibrahim Izzeddine argues the current system should not be changed despite the shortcomings he concedes it has.

Mr. Izzeddine, former minister of information and minister of state, says the inclusion of deputies in the government will strengthen its performance because it injects it with politicians who are "close to the pulse of the people."

"In the government we need both experts and representatives. If the government consists only of

experts, in time you tend to get to a position where you have glorified civil servants. You need people who reflect the people to carry on the policies of government. You need ministers who are close to the pulse of the people, close to the street," he told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Izzeddine stressed the need to have "a balance in government between experts and representatives."

"The democratic exercise in Jordan is new and it is too early to judge it. It is best to keep it as is," he said.

But "at this stage," he said, "it should be understood that not more than

half the members of Parliament should serve as ministers as well."

Critics of the current system also argue that parliament is rendered less effective as deputies eyeing a government post will use their powers as parliamentarians to achieve their personal political ambitions of becoming ministers.

"The deputy (who is seeking to become a minister) will have to curry favour with the government, and to await his turn in holding a portfolio" according to Senator Said Al Tal. Often politicians will run for parliament only because they feel it is the quickest route

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Arab World produces 3 times more refugees than it absorbs — study

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab World produces three times more refugees than it absorbs, according to a study presented to a regional conference on population here.

"By the end of December 1995, the Arab World had taken in nearly 588,400 non-Arab refugees while it drove to exile in neighbouring countries more than 1,484,000 of its own citizens," the study said.

Abdul Hamid Al Ouali, Middle East and South-West Asia legal advisor for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who prepared the study, said there were 599,000 Iraqi refugees in Iran, 420,000 Somalis in Ethiopia and Kenya, and 465,000 Sudanese in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Central African Republic.

Sudan holds the record with 450,000 refugees on its territory in addition to nearly four million people displaced because of the civil war that has rocked the south of the country since 1983.

But the largest concentration of refugees in the Arab World is held by the Palesti-

nians, who have been forced into exile by successive Arab-Israeli wars since the creation of Israel in 1948.

Of a total of six million Palestinians two-thirds are considered refugees or displaced.

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in charge of Palestinian refugees estimated in June 1995 that the number of Palestinians in its care at a total of 3,172,641.

Of those, 1.2 million were in Jordan, 517,412 in the West Bank, 683,560 in the Gaza Strip, 346,154 in Lebanon and 338,308 in Syria.

The number of Palestinian refugees outside the region covered by UNRWA was estimated at 516,724 while 500,000 others were said to be in non-Arab countries.

"The Arab region has been the most affected in the world by the phenomena of forced population displacements," Mr. Ouali said in the study presented at the Arab regional population conference (Dec. 7-12) in Cairo.

He linked this to "four

key events": the Arab-Israeli wars, the Algerian war, wars and consequent events in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf war.

In 1990-1991, more than one million foreign workers fled Iraq and Kuwait. Twice as many Kurds escaped from northern Iraq and headed for Turkey or Iran in the spring of 1991 while 800,000 Shiite Muslims left southern Iraq for Iran.

"New practices which conformed more with the Arab-Muslim tradition of asylum" emerged after these population shifts with the help of the UNHCR, fund drives for refugees — namely in Bosnia — and the easing of immigration policies for asylum seekers.

Mr. Ouali noted that Arab countries prefer to generously treat refugees, often through foreign assistance, rather than grant them asylum.

In the case of the Palestinians, this is aimed at not giving Israel any excuse to get rid of the problem.

In 1994 the 22-member Arab League adopted a convention on refugees but only Egypt has ratified it to date, the author said.



YEAR THROUGH PICTURES: An Israeli soldier walks past the silhouette of an orthodox Jewish man begging for alms for his religious institution above an underground passageway in West Jerusalem. This picture was among the hundreds that Reuters is releasing in a batch of "the year through pictures" marking the end of 1996 (Reuters photo)

Attack on Uday blow to Saddam

DUBAI (AFP) — The attack which wounded President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday also struck a blow to the Iraqi government's stability, opposition members said Friday.

Most opposition members said they believe Uday was targeted in a settling of scores within President Saddam's extended family where Uday has many enemies, adding only clan members could know where he was and breach his security.

But General Wafiq Samarrai, a former Iraqi intelligence chief who defected to Damascus in 1994, said the attack, carried out in the Al Mansour neighbourhood of Baghdad, was probably carried out by an opposition group.

An Iraqi opposition member in London, Mohammad Bahr Ulum, said Baghdad's "quick" announcement of the attack could mean "Uday was seriously wounded or that Saddam Hussein is preparing an unprecedented revenge" against the gunman.

Another opposition member in London, Mohammad Abdel Jabbar, said "Uday is viewed as the strongman in Baghdad after his father, and (the attack) is the result of conflicts within the family."

"Hitting (Uday) endangers Saddam's regime," said Abdel Jabbar, a spokesman for the opposition Iraqi National Council.

"Uday personally led the attacks that killed his brother-in-law Hussein Kamel Hassan (in February) and wounded in August 1995 his uncle Waibani Al-Takriti, said Mr. Abdul Jabbar.

Taking revenge against the son of the Iraqi president "is perfectly normal. It did not surprise us."

Mr. Bahr Ulum said the "attackers can only be from within the family, whose members are in permanent conflict to control the country's wealth."

"The family controls the country's resources

and is the only one to benefit from the resumption of oil exports" under the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations which came into effect on Tuesday, Mr. Bahr Ulum said.

It has a grip over the companies which will import and distribute the food and medicine under the deal, despite a massive monitoring system set up by the United Nations, he said.

Mr. Bahr Ulum and Mr. Abdul Jabbar said they had no details on the circumstances of the attack. But Gen. Samarrai said he had information that several gunmen ambushed Uday's car.

His visit to Al Mansour could have been foreseen since he travels there regularly to meet women, he said, adding it was not necessary to be a member of the family to launch the attack.

"Uday is part of the regime and is an important symbol and any attack against him amounts to a hostile act against the government," Gen. Samarrai said.

"Uday has given himself the prerogatives of the president. He summons ministers, fires them or blames them without restraint," he said.

"Many unhappy Iraqis believe Uday is his father's successor and don't like this idea. Attacking him could mean they want to eliminate the regime," he said.

Uday has no government position and was dismissed two months ago as head of "Saddam's fedayeen," a para-military group set up in 1994 to provide another ring of security for the president, Gen. Samarrai said.

But Iraqi sources said Uday continued to head the unit.

Other Iraqi sources, contacted from Amman, said five gunmen who ambushed Uday managed to escape. Among those arrested were 200 members of a Republican Guard elite unit, apparently under suspicion, they said.

There was no claim for the attack.

18 dead in Mogadishu battle

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Rival militiamen were fighting a pitched battle in south Mogadishu Friday, with the toll around 1:00 p.m. (1000 GMT) at least 18 dead, witnesses said.

Eleven of the dead were civilians, some hit by stray rounds far from the fighting, they said.

The fighting began in the middle of the night, pitting the militiamen of Musse Sudi Yalahow, who holds the enclave of Medina, and those of Osman Hassan Ali "Ato," who holds another section of south Mogadishu against the militiamen of warlord Hussein Mohammad Aided.

It was in Medina that Aided's father, General Mohammad Farah Aided, was fatally wounded in a battle on July 24. He died on August 1.

Mr. Yalahow told journalists his men had captured a "technical" pick-up truck

with a 23-mm anti-aircraft gun mounted on the tray.

Aided's supporters acknowledged that the vehicle had been disabled, but said it was under their protection in no-man's-land.

Mr. Yalahow told reporters that seven of his militiamen had been killed, but neither the Ato or the Aided faction gave their casualty figures.

Colonel Ahmed Warsame "Seer," one of Aided's top commanders, said his militiamen had withdrawn "for tactical reasons," but vowed to recapture the lost ground within 24 hours.

The militiamen were using artillery guns, recoilless rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine-guns.

Somalia has been ruled by warlords since the overthrow of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 after a bloody civil war.

Israel signs deal to maintain Nigeria's 'flying coffins'

LAGOS (AFP) — Israeli engineers will maintain the fleet of Nigeria Airways planes in a bid to reduce an accident rate which has led one Nigerian official to describe aircraft as "flying coffins," sources said Friday.

Israeli diplomatic sources said Israel Aircraft Industries, the state's biggest defence and aeronautics firm, has recently signed a contract with the Nigerian national carrier, notably with regard to the maintenance of its six Boeing 737 airliners.

Raphael Harlev, the former head of El Al, the Israeli national airline, and ex-deputy commander of the Israeli air force, is currently in Nigeria for a seminar on civil aviation.

On Nov. 7, a Boeing 727 owned by the Nigerian ADC airline company crashed in marshland near Lagos killing all 142 passengers and crew

aboard in the fifth fatal aircraft accident in the country in less than two years.

On Nov. 13 last year, a Nigeria Airways Boeing 737 with more than 100 passengers and crew on board crashed on landing in the northern city of Kaduna, killing 50 and injuring more than 40 people.

Details of that accident were never officially confirmed. The deadly series of crashes, generally blamed on the old age of Nigerian aircraft and poor maintenance, led former Aviation Minister General Nsikak Eduok to describe planes in service in the West African country as "flying coffins."

Nigeria and Israel reestablished diplomatic relations in 1992. Like many other African countries, Nigeria broke off ties following the Israeli-Arab war of Oct. 1973.

Tehran welcomes court ruling on case against U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran praised the International Court of Justice on Friday for agreeing to rule on a conflict between the United States and the Islamic republic dating back to the late 1980s.

"What you did was an act to preserve the integrity and value of the judicial system for the entire world," Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, referring to the U.N. court, said at weekly Muslim prayers at Tehran University.

Mr. Yazdi urged the world court to "try not to be influenced by political issues" during its investigation of the case, "for the sake of a fair trial."

The International Court of Justice declared itself competent Thursday to rule in a conflict opposing Iran and the United States over the destruction by U.S. warships of three Iranian oil rigs.

The U.N. court ruled by 14 votes against two "to entertain the claims of Iran." U.S. Judge Stephen Schwebel and Japan's Judge Shigeru Oda voted against taking on the case.

Iran, which filed the complaint, said the court should rule

in the case in accordance with a 1954 friendship treaty between Washington and Tehran under which the two sides are to settle their conflicts before the court.

While the United States admitted that there had been a violation of international law, it added that the matter had nothing to do with the friendship treaty.

In late 1987 and early 1988, during the Iran-Iraq conflict, U.S. warships destroyed three Iranian oil platforms in the Gulf.

Washington claimed that these platforms served as bases for military operations against international assets based in the Gulf.

Iran, however, said the destructions were not justified and that the United States intended to cause "maximum damage" to the Iranian economy, "in contradiction with the 1954 treaty."

The court ruled Thursday that the friendship treaty extended to other matters than trade, and therefore Iran's bid was legitimate. No opening date has been set for the trial.

Rafsanjani to visit Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is to make an official visit to Turkey next week, the foreign affairs ministry announced here Friday.

The ministry said Mr. Rafsanjani would hold talks with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who leads a coalition government dominated by his Islamic Welfare Party.

Iran's vice-minister for foreign affairs, Aladdin Brujerdi, was in Ankara on Monday to prepare the ground for the visit and for discussions on the security of the countries' common border.

Turkish diplomatic sources said border security would figure on the agenda of the Demirel-Rafsanjani talks.

Turkey has repeatedly accused Iran of harbouring outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels seeking to establish a homeland in southeastern Turkey, and doing nothing to prevent regular cross-border incursions.

Unlike his predecessors, the Islamist Erbakan has sought closer relations with Iran since his election last June, against the wishes of Washington which accuses Tehran of nurturing international terrorism.

Mr. Erbakan visited Iran in August, during which he signed a gas contract worth \$20 billion over 30 years.

Washington has demanded that Ankara drop the accord, which Turkey says is crucial to its energy requirements.

Officer defends army

A high-ranking Turkish army officer warned Muslim fundamentalists Friday not to try to overturn the expulsion of 69 officers, mostly accused of having Islamist links.

The senior officer, who was not identified, was widely quoted in the media defending the controversial decision by the high military council.

The ruling was signed into effect by Mr. Erbakan, but sparked a furious reaction from members of his party who said they would seek to have it appealed.

"Followers of the Sharia who are trying to destroy the Republic of Turkey, and those who are trying to upset the hierarchy and discipline of the army, are striving in vain," the officer said.

He said the army had "cleaned its house" in expelling the officers, who "were supported by Muslim fundamentalist circles."

The army sees itself as the guarantor of Turkey's secular status since the republic was founded in 1923.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
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PROGRAMME TWO	
14:05 The Adventures of Mickey and Donald	
14:30Circus	
15:00 Doc. — La France Aux Mille Villages	
15:30Fete des Bebes	
16:00Sports — Gillette	
16:30Chris Cross	
17:00News Flash	
17:02Futures	
17:15Dr. Dr. — Blue Heelers	
18:00Serie — Jack	
19:00Le Journal	
19:15Magazine — Ziva	
19:30News Headlines	
19:35 Comedy — Something Wilder	
20:00Doc. — Gardens of the World	
20:30Prison	
21:10Lois and Clarke	
22:00News in English	
22:25 Best Seller — Devices and Desires	
23:15 Feature Film: "Victoria Victoria"	

PRAYER TIMES	
05:00Fajr	
06:22(Sunrise) Dhuha	
11:30Dhuhr	
14:14Asr	
16:37Maghreb	
18:00Isha	

CHURCHES	
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Assemblies of God Church Tel.	632785
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St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.	
Armanian International Church Tel. 827126	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457	
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology	
Rainfall is expected at intervals with skies partly cloudy to cloudy and winds westerly to moderate.	
On Sunday, stable weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising gradually. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moder-	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Mukhlis Hakaseh819220	
Dr. Rubi Sakkar856457	
Dr. Fadi Al Khatib865456	
Dr. Yusef Al Faqih790104	
Firas pharmacy661912	
Ferdows pharmacy778336	
Al Asema pharmacy637055	
Nairookh pharmacy623672	
Al Salam pharmacy636730	
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Shmeisani pharmacy637660	
Najib pharmacy847632	
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ZARQA:	
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Khalifeh pharmacy985417	
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Food Control Centre637111	
Civil Defence Department	

661111	Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn
642816	Maternity, J. Amn
642441/2	Jabal Amman Maternity
642362	Malhass, J. Amman
636140	Palestine, Shmeisani
607071	Shmeisani Hospital
669131	University Hospital
845845	Al-Muasher Hospital
6672279	The Islamic, Abdali
66612637	Al-Ahli, Abdali
6641646	Italian, Al-Muhajreen
77101/3	Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh
775111/15	Army, Marka
891611/15	Queen Alia Hospital
602240/50	Amal Hospital
674155	The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery
865199	ZARQA:
09983323	Zarqa Govt. Hospital
09900560	Zarqa National Hospital
09986732	Ibn Sina Hospital
09990990	Al Hikam Modern Hospital
815615	Electric Power Company
636381	RJ Flight Information
08-53200	Queen Alia Intl. Airport
08-53200	AMMAN:
813813/32	Husseini Medical Centre

FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.	
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights	
08:55Damascus (RJ)	
09:45New Delhi (RJ)	
09:55Karachi, Dubai (RJ)	
10:05Beirut (RJ)	
10:30Colombo (RJ)	
11:45Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)	
14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)	
15:55London (RJ)	
16:20Cairo (RJ)	
17:40Berlin (RJ)	
18:45Jeddah (add) (RJ)	
19:35Vienna (RJ)	
05:35Bangkok (RJ)	
Other Flights	
12:40Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)	
15:05Vienna (OS)	
18:15Dubai, Damascus (EK)	
21:00Paris, Damascus (AF)	
22:20Lamaca (CY)	
22:25Beirut (ME)	
22:35Cairo (MS)	
23:40Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)	
23:50London (RJ)	
01:00London, Damascus (BA)	
03:45Rome (AZ)	
06:20Tel Aviv (LY)	
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights	
09:20Aqaba (RW)	
18:55Sharm Al Sheikh (RW)	
Other Flights	
00:15Damascus, Amsterdam (KL)	
03:00Beirut, Athens (OA)	
07:00Beirut (ME)	
13:30Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)	
15:50Vienna (OS)	
19:15Dubai (EK)	
23:10Lamaca (CY)	
23:30Cairo (MS)	
23:55Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (AF)	
00:40Amsterdam (KL)	

04:35Rome (AZ)	
06:30London (RJ)	
Royal Wings (RW) Flights	
20:30Aqaba (RW)	
HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN	
Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday	
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday	
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday	
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday	
MARKET PRICES	
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.	
Apple700/500	
Banana550/550	
Banana (imported)850/600	
Cabbage70/50	
Carrot270/150	
Cauliflower110/80	
Cucumber (large)100/80	
Cucumber (small)220/150	
Eggplant150/80	
Garlic800/550	
Grapefruit500/350	
Lemon400/200	
Marrow (large)80/40	
Marrow (small)140/100	
Onion (green)180/120	
Onion (dry)180/120	
Orange580/400	
Pepper (hot)250/150	
Pepper (sweet)250/150	
Potato290/170	
Spinach130/90	
String Bean400/350	
Tomato140/100	

Serb opposition could agree to new general elections

BELGRADE (AFP) — The Serbian opposition is ready to accept new general elections under international supervision to end nearly four weeks of its power struggle with President Slobodan Milosevic, opposition leader Vuk Draskovic said Friday.

It is the first time the opposition has raised the possibility of new polls since authorities cancelled municipal elections on Nov. 17 when it won control of 15 of the country's 18 major cities and towns.

"We are ready to accept new local elections and Serbian and federal (Yugoslav) elections under democratic conditions," said Mr. Draskovic. Those conditions had to include a free

media and the presence of international monitors.

"We can accept this now. But President Slobodan Milosevic is not ready to do this," he added.

Mr. Draskovic is president of the Serbian renewal movement, one of the main parties in the loose opposition coalition together.

The last legislative elections were held on Nov. 3, two weeks before the notorious municipal polls, and were won by Mr. Milosevic's ruling Serbian Socialist Party.

The official news agency Tanjug said earlier that Mr. Milosevic had extended an invitation to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to review the crisis in Ser-

bia. The invitation was made in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the agency said.

In the letter, Mr. Milosevic said opposition claims that Serbian authorities had cancelled the election results were "pure invention."

At its Vienna base, a spokeswoman for the OSCE said the organisation — which has dealt closely with Mr. Milosevic's regime in its role as organiser of this year's first post-war elections in Bosnia — had not been officially informed of the invitation, but knew of it from media reports.

"The letter has not been relayed to the OSCE. We're aware of it" through the press, Melissa Fleming said.

Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, who met Mr. Milosevic Thursday, said after the meeting that he believed Mr. Milosevic was looking for a way out of the crisis — the most prolonged series of protests against his authoritarian regime.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets in Belgrade and other cities each day for more than three weeks calling on authorities to recognise the full results of the Nov. 17 municipal polls.

In those elections, the Together Coalition won 15 out of 18 major towns, while the ruling coalition, dominated by the Serbian Socialist Party, won in the countryside.

Hong Kong waits for 'dream team' leadership in 200 days

HONG KONG (R) — Two hundred days before its historic handover to China, Hong Kong has adopted a charismatic shipping tycoon as helmsman to lead it into the 21st century.

But the British colony of 6.3 million people is waiting to see if chief executive-designate Tung Chee-hwa can form a "dream team" with the territory's most popular public figure, "iron lady" Anson Chan, head of the present colonial civil service.

The former tycoon, who resigned from his shipping empire to become Hong Kong's first post-colonial leader, takes over from British Governor Chris Patten at midnight next June 30, when a century and a half of colonial rule comes to an end.

"If Tung can keep Anson in her job, we will have a dream team leadership that both Britain and the Hong Kong community will be happy with," a senior official said.

Mr. Tung, 59, selected by a Beijing-vested electoral college to run the future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, named Ms. Chan Thursday as favourite to be his deputy, saying he wanted her to stay on as head of the 180,000-member civil service.

"I have said I hope she can remain at her post. She, too, has indicated she is willing to do so. I hope she can be my chief secretary," Mr. Tung said in the Chinese city of Shenzhen.

"I would like to see a

smooth transition. I hope most of the senior officials can remain in office," he said.

Ms. Chan, 56, has signalled her interest in working for Mr. Tung but restated her fervent belief in libertarian values.

She praised Mr. Tung for urging Hong Kong to forget political squabbles and "find common ground to build Hong Kong together."

But she cautioned that the freedoms and plurality of views that made Hong Kong one of the world's economic marvels must be preserved, and said pragmatism and flexibility were vital to it.

"Its very success has been founded on tolerance of different viewpoints," she told the college gathering. "I believe that the law was made for man, not man for the law, that government is the servant of the people, not their master."

Of a similar age, Mr. Tung and Ms. Chan have much in common and have always described their relationship as friendly.

Both their families moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong as the Communists overran China, defeating the nationalists in a long civil war that ended in 1949.

The contest for Hong Kong's handover leadership has been dominated by the Shanghai connection. The two candidates who lost to Mr. Tung — former Chief Justice Yang Ti Liang and entrepreneur Peter Woo — were also Shanghai-born.

Mr. Chan herself had ear-

lier been touted as a leadership candidate, having emerged in the polls this year as Hong Kong's most popular political personality with more than 60 per cent of public support. But she decided not to run against Mr. Tung.

The Shanghai form one of the greatest networks within Hong Kong. Tens of thousands of Shanghai people fled the Communist regime and relocated their businesses in Hong Kong after 1949.

The current leadership in China is also heavily dominated by the so-called "Shanghai faction" led by President Jiang Zemin, who has been actively promoting officials from his home area.

Mr. Tung, a conservative who was once bailed out by Chinese funds and who opposes conflict with Beijing, has evolved from a publicity-shy figure into a charismatic leader-in-waiting who can charm and quip his way through news conferences.

He shifts comfortably from one language to another — English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Mr. Chan is profoundly respected by civil servants for her no-nonsense, efficient administrative style, which has earned her a reputation for toughness — tempered by a huge smile, kind heart and balanced political outlook.

"The question is whether it is too balanced. Beijing may reject her for defending democracy too much," the official said.

Britain's Labour by-election win costs Major his majority

LONDON (R) — Britain's opposition Labour Party Thursday scored a runaway victory in a parliamentary by-election that further weakened Prime Minister John Major's grip on power.

Labour's triumph in the election in the Barnsley East constituency in northern England — a Labour stronghold — ensured that the Conservatives no longer command a majority in parliament for the first time in 17 years.

The new blow to Mr. Major's embattled Conservatives came as the party faced deep internal divisions over relations with the European Union and trailed badly in opinion polls.

Labour local council leader Jeff Ennis won 14,683 votes against 1,299 for Conservative Jane Ellison, who finished third to Liberal De-

mocrat candidate David Willis 1,502.

Turnout was just over 33 per cent of the electorate of about 53,000.

Mr. Ennis was defending a Labour majority of 24,777 votes won by his predecessor Terry Patchett, whose recent death led to the by-election.

The by-election was one of the last tests of public opinion before the next general election — which must be called by May — but the run-down, working-class constituency has long voted left of centre and is not typical of the nation at large.

Ms. Ennis said after his victory: "Tonight's result in Barnsley East should be seen as a springboard to labour victory in a general election."

Labour Party leader Tony Blair said: "The govern-

ment majority has gone and we will continue to pile on the pressure until the government has gone too."

Labour has however made clear it will not move immediately to a confidence vote in parliament, where Mr. Major can count on the support of nine pro-British Northern Ireland Ulster Unionists.

The result nevertheless deepened Mr. Major's problems, coming days after he effectively lost his majority in parliament when a disgruntled Conservative MP, Sir John Gort, withdrew support.

Even if Mr. Gort is still formally counted as a Conservative, the party's 323 voting members of parliament are now evenly matched by legislators sitting for opposition parties.

Tribal gunmen massacre 25 in India

GUWAHATI, India (AFP) — Tribal separatists shot dead 25 villagers Friday after setting their houses on fire in the far-eastern Indian state of Tripura, officials said.

The gunmen belonging to the outlawed All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) stormed Kalyanpur village about 100 kilometres from Agartala, the

state capital, and torched several houses.

As the inmates ran out, the militants opened fire with automatic weapons, killing the 25 men, women and children. Some 25 others were injured.

Tripura Home Minister Samar Choudhury said over the telephone that the attack took

place around 3:00 a.m. (2130 GMT Thursday).

"As it was early morning most of the villagers could not react and so the casualty was high," he said.

Police sources said the death toll could go up as many of the 15 injured were in serious condition. Some had been hospitalised in Agartala.

Chechen leader injured in car crash

MOSCOW (AFP) — Chechen separatist President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev was hospitalised Thursday after being injured in a car accident on the way out of Grozny, Interfax News Agency said quoting his office.

Mr. Yandarbiyev, who will run in presidential elections in January, broke his collarbone and suffered fractures in both arms, the office said.

Mr. Yandarbiyev, who was immediately hospitalised and may have surgery on one arm, himself said immediately after the crash that it was a simple accident.

In an unrelated incident, Interfax reported that two Russian soldiers were killed Wednesday in a village in southern Chechnya.

The bodies of the two, who appear to have been shot, were found in a square in the village of Gerzen-Aul, 40 kilometres east of Grozny, a spokesman for Russian Interior Ministry Forces in the separatist republic said.

The soldiers, named only as Zhironov, a captain, and Semyonov, were accompanying a convoy of Interior Ministry troops when their car, which was also carrying a Chechen officer, separated from the others.

It was not clear why the vehicle left the convoy.

The Chechen officer remains missing. Joint teams of Russian and Chechen officers are monitoring the withdrawal of Russian forces from the separatist republic.

Russia and Chechnya signed a peace accord in August ending 21 months of war, and President Boris Yeltsin last month ordered the pullout of all remaining Russian troops.

Meanwhile, the first team of foreign observers expected in Chechnya to monitor parliamentary and legislative elections next month has arrived in the breakaway republic, ITAR-TASS news agency reported Friday.

It said the team of deputies from the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had registered with Chechnya's Central Electoral Commission, and had praised the start of the election campaign.

Parliamentary and presidential polls in Chechnya are slated for Jan. 27, the first since a ceasefire and peace accord ended 21 bloody months of separatist warfare.

Tens of observer groups have announced their intention to monitor the polls, which could pose accommodation and logistics problems, ITAR-TASS added.

Several observers have expressed fears of irregularities due to a lack of reliable electoral registers.



Reporters take pictures of 80 armoured personal carriers donated by the U.S., Dec. 12 in the Bosnian army base in Hadzici, some 20 kilometres south of Sarajevo. U.S. special envoy to Bosnia James Pardew officially delivered the first \$100 million worth of U.S. heavy weapons for the army of the Muslim-Croat Federation, according to the "Train and equip programme." (Reuters photo)

Egypt, UAE deliver arms to Bosnia

SARAJEVO (R) — Two ships sent by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with heavy weapons for the Bosnian Federation Army have docked at the Adriatic port of Ploce, diplomats said Thursday.

Workers are now unloading the arms, supplied under the U.S.-sponsored "train and equip" aid programme designed to strengthen the Muslim-Croat Federation army, said James Pardew, an American envoy overseeing the project.

He told reporters that the Egyptian ship carried 24 long-range Howitzers and 18 anti-aircraft guns, while the UAE military had sent 36 105 mm Howitzers with ammunition and planned to send 42 AMX tanks and 44 armoured reconnaissance vehicles in the next few weeks.

Washington's European allies have declined to back the military aid programme, arguing that it risks reigniting the Bosnian conflict that ended a year ago and that the area is already over-loaded with weapons.

But Mr. Pardew said arming the Muslim-Croat Federation would ensure a balance of military power and deter Bosnian Serb forces, who enjoyed a big advantage in heavy weaponry during the war, from think-

ing of overrunning the federation.

"The train and equip programme is designed to support the federation's right of self-defence," he said. "The programme is no threat to anyone who wants lasting peace in Bosnia and who supports the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement."

Under the Dayton Accords, Bosnia is a loose union comprising a Serb Republic and a Muslim-Croat Federation.

The United States has already delivered tanks, armoured personnel carriers, M-16 rifles and communications equipment to the federation and retired U.S. army officers have begun training four brigades.

The U.S. weapons are being kept at storage sites in Bosnia until mutually distrustful Muslim and Croat officers overcome their reluctance and merge their armies into a single fighting force, Mr. Pardew said.

U.S. military aid has been contingent on a unified Muslim-Croat army and the removal of foreign Islamic fighters from Bosnia.

Muslims and Croats fought a 10-month war during the main conflict between the Muslim-led Bosnian government and Serb forces.

U.S. officials say the military aid programme does not violate an arms control agreement signed by the Serbs and the Muslim-Croat Federation.

Mr. Pardew accused the Serbs of failing to abide by the pact. "I'm certainly not happy with the Bosnian Serbs' (weapons) reduction. They are absolutely out of compliance and show very little inclination to comply with the agreement," he said.

He hinted that Washington might consider increasing its military aid to Bosnia unless the Serbs observed the arms control pact.

"If the Serbs are out of compliance on the arms control agreement then that changes the entire calculation and we'll have to reconsider our options at that point," he said.

Meanwhile, ending three months of bitter wrangling, Bosnia's collective presidency named former Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic and a previously unknown Serb as joint premiers Thursday, the first of a raft of cabinet appointments.

Mr. Silajdzic and Boro Busic, a Serb, were appointed during a meeting of Bosnia's three-member collective presidency, chaired by the Muslim Alija Izetbegovic, and including Serb

hardliner Momcilo Krajcinik, and Kresimir Zubak, a Croat.

The co-premiers can be sacked by the collective presidency.

Mr. Silajdzic and Mr. Busic will take it in turn to chair the weekly cabinet meeting. A Croat will serve as deputy premier.

The House of Representatives, the lower house of the Bosnian national parliament, meets for the first time next Tuesday to ratify the appointments.

Before then, the other 10 members of the central government — four Croats, three Muslims and three Serbs — are expected to be named.

The delicate balancing of representatives of the country's three main ethnic groups reflects the bitter legacy from Bosnia's three and a half year war.

The Serb, Croat and Muslim joint presidents, bowing to pressure from international mediators, only agreed to form Bosnia's first united government, named the council of ministers, earlier this month.

The central government will include three ministries. The foreign minister is to be a Croat, the trade minister a Muslim and the civilian affairs and communications minister a Serb.

Pentagon will review U.S. 'two-war' strategy

WASHINGTON (R) — A major defence review in the next five months is likely to determine whether the shrinking U.S. military can continue to be ready to win two major regional conflicts at once, the Pentagon said Thursday.

"If you decrease the resources then you have to reassess the requirements," Defence Secretary William Perry told a news conference, adding that military requirements and money were connected "with an iron logic."

He and other top defence officials said the quadrennial defence review would look at a military already reduced to 1.45 million

troops by post-cold war budget cuts and at expensive new arms programmes planned for the years ahead.

"Everything is on the table," Deputy Defence Secretary John White said, referring to matching strategy with plans to spend up to \$260 billion a year on defence over the next five years. "We're going to look at everything and see what fits and what doesn't fit," he said, adding that the study was expected to be completed in mid-May.

The review, similar to one four years ago, comes at a time when the U.S. military is not only being called on to be ready to fight two wars at once but to take part in

peacekeeping and routine "forward-presence" operations around the world.

Mr. Perry and army Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the military Joint Chiefs of Staff, have repeatedly said the U.S. military must be able to fight two major conflicts virtually simultaneously, pointing to continued tension in the Gulf and on the Korean peninsula.

And while Republicans in Congress have raised objections to seven years of previous defence cuts, the Clinton administration and Congress have called for balancing the U.S. budget after the turn of the century.

Mr. White denied budget

balancing faced a "train wreck" with plans to spend billions on such weapons as the radar-avoiding F-22 Stealth fighter and a separate joint strike fighter for the air force, navy and Marine Corps in the 21st century.

But Mr. Perry conceded the new review, similar to the "bottom-up" defence review four years ago, would be controversial. "All through the four years (since the last such study), including today, there are still debates as to whether two major regional conflicts is the proper way of stating the needs," Mr. Perry said.

Armed gang in Swiss-style 'great train robbery'

GENEVA (AFP) — In a rerun of Britain's "great train robbery" in the 1960s, five masked gunmen made off with more than 20 sacks of mail after holding up a Zurich-Geneva train, police said.

The meticulously-planned operation, which went off without a shot being fired, "could be by real professionals," police said, likening the daring raid to the infamous 1963 robbery led by Ronald Biggs.

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On Thursday they appealed to members of the

public who may have seen anything connected with the audacious robbery to come forward.

The shocked driver said that one of the bandits spoke Italian and the other French, two of the official languages in Switzerland.

He also noticed three cars parked among the vines near where the 12-carriage train was commandeered, a source told AFP.

Police Thursday examined postal slips to try and determine whether the thieves had any knowledge of jewel or cash shipments between Zurich, Switzerland's financial centre, and Geneva.

Two robbers entered the engine room of the intercity train at about 10:30 p.m. (2130 GMT Thursday) apparently during one of its stops. Using threats, they made the driver halt the

train outside a tunnel and then handcuffed him. Three more accomplices turned up and the French postal worker, 33, offered no resistance when the black-masked men burst into the wagon and put him in handcuffs.

That left them free to raid the sacks.

The bandits disappeared along with their booty into the rows of vines around the tracks and took off in cars.

Investigators said that because of rail works, the train was using right-hand tracks and that it came to a stop at the top of an embankment, making it easy for the thieves to enter the post wagon.

The affair shows just how easy it is to break into Swiss engine carriages, whose doors sport only simple locks which can be easily opened.

A spokesman at Switzerland's Federal Railways admitted there was a "security problem."

In September a former Swiss National Railways employer held up a train carrying 200 passengers in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The man, suffering from psychiatric problems, threatened the driver with an air gun before being overpowered.

In 1989, a German wanting to travel ticket-free gained entry into engine room of a train in Zurich and was electrocuted.

Three years ago, a man from Bern received a suspended jail sentence for posing as a train driver and taking over a Bern-Zurich train.

Ironically, the National Swiss Railways have been talking about charging extra for passengers who want to see the sights from the driver's cabin.

France's chirac sticks to tough economic reforms

PARIS (R) — French President Jacques Chirac has pledged to keep on course with painful economic reforms and ruled out a cabinet reshuffle despite the record unpopularity of Prime Minister Alain Juppé.

In his first major interview since July, Mr. Chirac sought to persuade French citizens that the country was on the right track and that he had not forgotten 1995 election campaign promises such as a war on unemployment, which has since risen to a record 12.6 per cent.

But he came under fire for offering little new in his two-hour television appearance on the eve of Friday's European Union summit in Dublin and for blaming the French people for being too resistant to change.

"Jacques Chirac... stuck to the course of a policy that doesn't work," said Socialist spokesman François Hollande.

Mr. Chirac made a strong defence of the planned single European currency from 1999 and the budgetary strictness needed to qualify for it.

The proposed single currency was vital to revive France's sluggish economy and to give Europe the power to challenge U.S. "hegemony," he said.

Mr. Chirac said a devaluation suggested by government allies including former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing would be disastrous and would break the Franco-German alliance at the heart of the European Union (EU).

He said he believed the EU would reach agreement, perhaps during the Dublin summit, on a "stability pact" on budgetary discipline in the future Euro currency zone.

Mr. Chirac pledged to keep Juppé, who has become the least popular premier in modern French history. An opinion poll released on Wednesday found 54 per cent of French voters want Mr. Juppé out.

"I have no intention of making a cabinet reshuffle," said Mr. Chirac.

Many commentators have been speculating Mr. Chirac will order a reshuffle sometime next year to streamline the government for elections scheduled in 1998. He praised Mr. Juppé as courageous.

Mr. Juppé said Mr. Chirac had expressed a great ambition for a "strong, generous and united France." Mr. Chirac's right-wing allies applauded his performance before a panel of tough-questioning reporters in the Elysee Palace.

Mr. Chirac's only hint of criticism of Mr. Juppé was to say the government should do more to explain its policies better.

"We are a profoundly conservative country where it is extremely difficult to change anything because this runs into traditions, fears and so this is a country that needs a lot of dialogue, explanation," he said.

Serge July of the left-leaning Liberation newspaper savaged Mr. Chirac in an editorial Friday for blaming conservatism for France's ills.

"Jacques Chirac has come to tell the French people that it was their fault, that they had no one to blame but themselves. Conservatives the lot of them," he wrote.

Mr. Chirac's only announcement was that he had told the government to set up a commission to reform the judiciary, strengthen the independence of prosecutors and bolster the presumption of innocence for suspects. Grilled at length for the first time since he came to

office in 1995 about suspected political kickbacks and sleaze probes into political parties including his own, Mr. Chirac said: "Probes must be carried out to the end and punishment must be all the more exemplary as it concerns people in position of power."

He said the government should continue cutting taxes, especially income tax, as part of a fiscal reform. But he also said France should continue "draconian" cuts in spending.

President Chirac Thursday ruled out cutting off aid to Algeria despite threats of new bomb attacks by Algerian Islamic guerrillas who accuse Paris of propping up President Liamine Zeroual.

"If Algeria is isolated, notably economically, then the worst is to be feared, chaos could lie in wait for the country," Mr. Chirac said in a television interview. France, which ruled Algeria from 1830 to 1962, has long backed international efforts to aid that country's fledgling economy.

Mr. Chirac also said it was too early to say who planted a bomb on a Paris train last week that killed four people and injured almost 100 even though the bomb was similar to those used by Algerian guerrillas in a wave of blasts in France last year.

He denied charges by the Algerian Muslim extremists, who have been battling Mr. Zeroual's military-backed government since 1992 in a war that has claimed 50,000 lives, that France interfered in Algeria's internal affairs.

"France does not support a government, France does not interfere in the affairs of Algeria," he said. The guerrillas took up arms after the military authorities cancelled elections that the Muslims were poised to win.

He also endorsed Mr. Zeroual's election last year, saying he was "elected in conditions that were not contested by anyone on the question of their democratic basis."

Mr. Chirac said he had hopes that promised legislative elections would take place in the North African country next year.

He praised police investigating last Tuesday's bomb-bombing on a train at Paris' port-royal station.

But he said "it's too early to say where the inquiry will lead... Every trail is being followed."



French President Jacques Chirac poses moments before the start of a live television interview at the Elysee Palace Thursday. Mr. Chirac appears in this interview format in a bid to restore confidence in his embattled conservative government (Reuter photo)

U.S. aide calls French snub 'discourteous'

WASHINGTON (R) — A U.S. official Thursday insisted that Secretary of State Warren Christopher was snubbed by French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette at a NATO meeting and called the action "extremely discourteous."

"This kind of behaviour is exceptionally unusual," said the official, who witnessed the incident Tuesday in Brussels.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official said: "It is extremely discourteous behaviour... It is hard to imagine what could prompt such behaviour."

At a luncheon of NATO foreign ministers, all of Mr. Christopher's counterparts except Mr. De Charette made laudatory comments on what was probably the retiring U.S. diplomat's last official foreign visit, the official said.

When NATO Secretary General Javier Solana said he wanted to make a statement honouring Mr. Christopher at an event that evening, the U.S. official said, Mr. De Charette walked out. His place was taken by the French ambassador, who turned his chair away from the proceedings and "gabbled" with an aide, the official said.

A senior French official said Mr. De Charette unintentionally missed Mr. Solana's tribute to Mr. Christopher at a NATO dinner and did not deliberately snub him. "The tribute was not on the agenda and it was therefore unaware that it would take place that Mr. De Charette was absent from the room," he said.

The French official told Reuters other prominent NATO foreign ministers were also absent but he declined to identify them. Mr. De Charette had to leave the room in order to address a news conference, the official said.

The French Foreign Ministry called media reports of the incident "false and malicious." In a statement, the ministry took issue with reports in the Washington Post and Herald Tribune that said Mr. De Charette walked out of the luncheon.

"Those who know Mr. De Charette know that his courtesy to his colleagues has always been beyond reproach," the French statement said, adding that "the aim of those who peddled this information is clearly to damage French-American relations."

Asked whether Washington plans to bring the matter up with France in any formal way, the U.S. official replied that Mr. Christopher was a "nature adult" who knows, he commands the respect of his colleagues.

At a briefing with reporters, State Department spokesman Nick Burns praised the Washington Post account and said it contained only one inaccuracy, the timing of the incident. His comments appeared to add oil to the flames of a trans-Atlantic controversy that soured Mr. Christopher's last trip before he retires and hands over to U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright.

The controversy reflects the raw state of Franco-U.S. relations, affected by disputes over the reform of NATO's military structure, the succession to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, France's drive for a bigger say in the Middle East and Western policy on Zaire.

Probably the most serious fight concerns the future of NATO's Southern Command, which controls the Mediterranean.

France demands that Washington hand over the post it has held since NATO was created in 1949 to a European. The United States has refused and is not amenable to compromise.

500,000 refugees in Tanzania trek away from Rwanda

NGARA, Tanzania (R) — A stream of up to nearly half a million Rwandan and Burundian refugees trekked away from Tanzania's border with Rwanda Friday.

"The situation today is the exodus is still continuing. One thousand people an hour are moving through Kitale (camp)," said Anne Willem Bijleveld of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Kitale is the camp farthest southeast so the human stream passed through it as it snaked southeast away from Rwanda.

"It's sad, just sad," added Mr. Bijleveld, blaming extremist Hutu intimidators for the exodus, which tore into tatters plans by UNHCR and Tanzanian authorities for all 540,000 Rwandan refugees to return home by the end of this month.

"This is all pure manipulation and this is what is the tragedy, a pure humanitarian tragedy," the UNHCR official said.

All seven camps in Benaco region of Ngara had already been emptied or were in the process of emptying, Mr. Bijleveld said.

They comprised Benaco with 162,000 refugees, Lumasi with 113,000, Musuhura with 81,000, Kitale with 94,000 including 59,000 Burundians, Lukole with 20,620, Keza with 23,318 and a small camp with 534, making a total of 494,472 refugees.

Near Lumasi camp, aid workers merely watched as a column of refugees who left the camp Thursday got to their feet at dawn Friday, loaded their belongings on their heads and resumed walking.

"They rested for a few hours during the night and now appear heading towards Barigi Game Reserve, which has lots of wildlife so they can get food," said a U.N. official monitoring the flow.

"The reserve is flat but very marshy so our main fear is groups of refugees will break up and scatter so we are looking at a similar situation to eastern Zaire where we lost track of them," she added.

Up to half a million other Hutu Rwandan refugees may still be adrift in the equatorial forests of eastern Zaire where a revolt by Tutsi Zaireans drove more than 500,000 other refugees back into Rwanda last month.

The U.N. official at Lumasi quoted many refugees as saying they did not know where they were going but just joined the lines heading southeast. Some said they were heading to Kenya or Malawi.

Members of the Rwandan Hutu militia, the Interahamwe, do not want to go home for fear of prosecution or reprisals for the genocide of up to a million Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. They also want the other refugees to stay with them on the grounds of greater strength in numbers.

Meanwhile, the political leader of victorious rebels in eastern Zaire declared a unilateral ceasefire Thursday and urged the international community to push Zaire's government into negotiations.

"Because of much pressure from abroad we have stopped (the war)," Laurent Kabila, chairman of the Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire, told Reuters.

Kabila announced a three-week unilateral ceasefire on Nov. 4 to allow hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees stranded in eastern Zaire to return home.

The earlier ceasefire was broken by fighting around Goma before the strategic city was abandoned by Zairean government troops and their Rwandan Hutu allies.

In Thursday's interview at his headquarters in Goma, Mr. Kabila made clear his latest offer was conditional.

"This (war) can continue if there is not a clear indication from the international community and the gang in power in Kinshasa to say they are willing to surrender or to start negotiations," he said.

After a two-month offensive the rebels now control a swathe of territory about 500 kilometres long from north to south in eastern Zaire, including the main towns of Goma, Bukavu and Uvira.

Mr. Kabila said the rebel alliance still wanted to take power in the Zairean capital but he said he would settle for elections organised by the international community.

"What we want is to have elections in this country," the veteran revolutionary said.

He declined to say how long the ceasefire would last and no timetable was set for the start of negotiations.

Mr. Kabila said rebels had stopped short of the towns of Walikale, 100 kilometres northwest of Goma, and Bunia, 400 kilometres north of Goma.

The Zairean government was reinforcing Walikale but had withdrawn its forces from Bunia on the Ugandan border, he said.

"We want them (Kinshasa) to negotiate instead of calling in friends and mercenaries," he said.

France isolated after blocking Annan for U.N. chief

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — France was isolated Thursday after casting a lone negative vote in the 15-member U.N. Security Council against Ghanaian Kofi Annan in informal polling on the next U.N. chief.

U.N. diplomats said the "straw poll" result was significant as it meant that Egypt, which has continued to back Egyptian U.N. chief Boutros Ghali, had rallied behind the Ghanaian U.N. undersecretary-general for peacekeeping.

Mr. Annan's score has steadily increased in the informal votes since Tuesday. In a first round Thursday, he obtained 13 votes in favour, with two "noes" including a negative vote from a permanent member, while in the second round his score rose to 14 favourable votes.

U.N. Security Council President Paolo Fulci refused to provide details of the closed-door informal vote, but diplomats said it was no secret that permanent member France

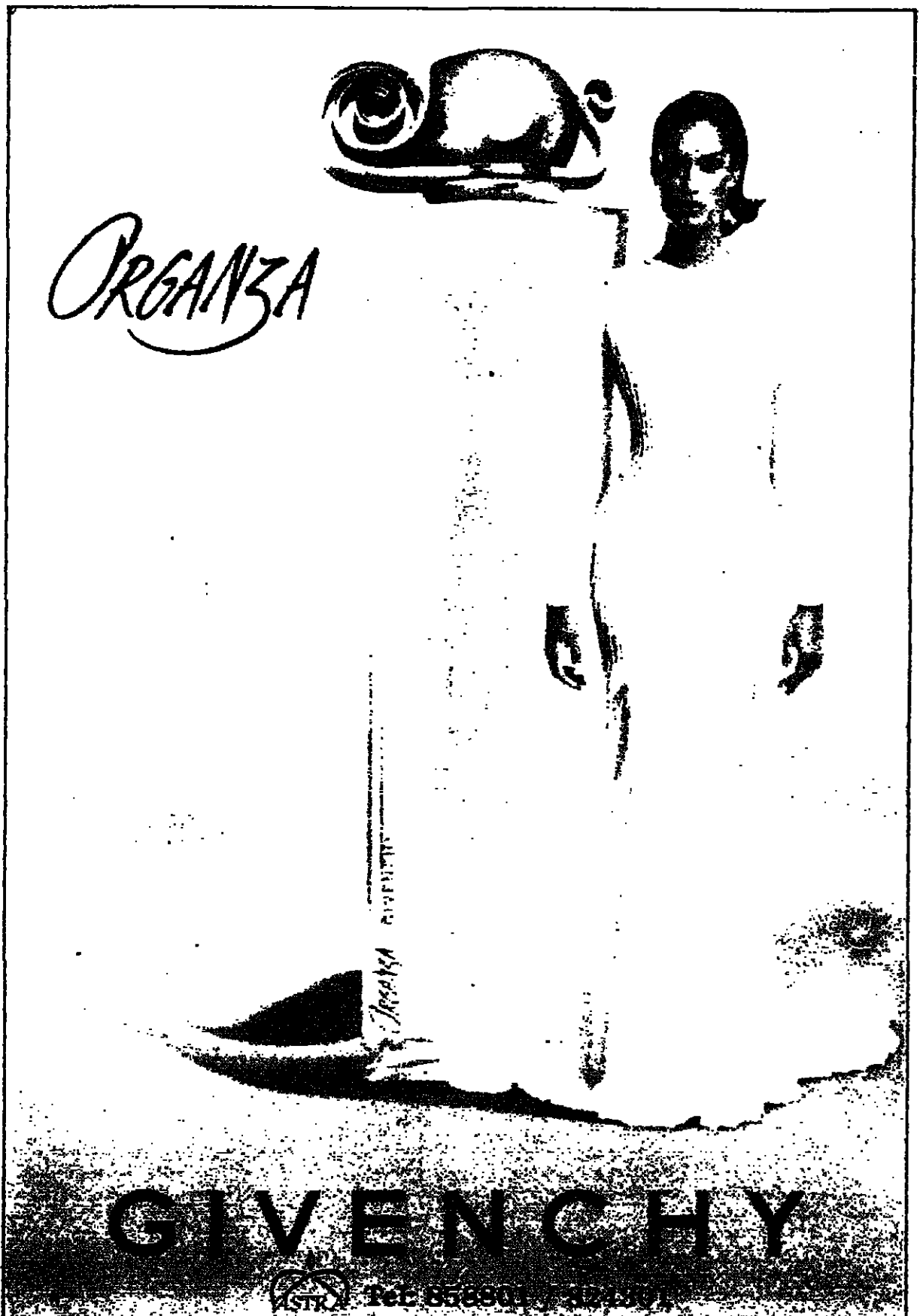
was alone in casting a vote of "discouragement" which could spell a veto in a formal vote.

Mr. Fulci scheduled a new Security Council meeting Friday during which he said more straw polls would be held.

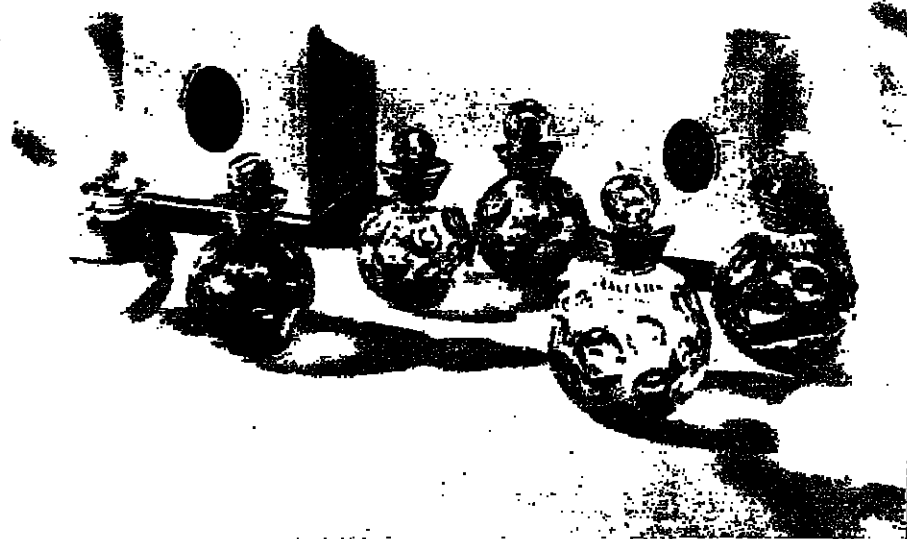
France has been engaged in a politico-linguistic war of nerves since Tuesday with the United States and Britain on the issue of selecting the next U.N. chief.

France has systematically cast negative votes against Mr. Annan while the United States and Britain have voted against the three other candidates who are from Francophone Africa.

The voting intentions of the five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — are key as they hold veto power and their opposition in a formal vote could spell a veto.



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Gloom and doom of settlements

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave another proof of his double standards Friday by announcing, after assuring Minister of Information Marwan Muasher of his government's "commitment to the peace process," that he will pour millions of dollars into settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Netanyahu's latest announcement shows that Israel will not, rather does not want to, understand what danger expanding settlements poses to Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis alike. Jordan's message to Israel seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

Netanyahu, after all, is proving to be what everyone was warning he was: a hardliner who will risk taking the region back into war in pursuit of his political and nationalistic agenda.

Driven by an antiquated ideology, to put it mildly, Netanyahu could not realise that the violent attacks in the occupied Palestinian lands over the weekend are direct results of the policies that he has adopted since coming to power in June. Stalling on the Palestinian track, going back on the commitment made by the late Yitzhak Rabin to the Syrians, beating the drums of war, and, in the process, antagonising Egypt, Jordan and other Arab countries are all actions that certainly play into the hands of extremists on both sides.

The Palestinian president, Yasser Arafat, his Fateh movement, the mainstream Palestinian factions, and the vast majority of the Palestinian people cannot be held responsible for Thursday's killing of two settlers that was claimed by the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The question that must be asked is: Would not the chances of such attacks ever happening again be so much smaller had Israel continued to engage Syria and Lebanon in the peace talks and honoured its commitments to the Palestinians? The answer is that violence will always breed violence in the absence of hope and efforts to make real peace.

What then is the best and most sobering reaction to Netanyahu's new dose of bellicosity and stubbornness? The world has to present a united and solid front against those who are willing to reverse the peace process. The Israeli government should get a taste of its own medicine: No carrots and more stick if Israel persists in its defiance of the international community.

Meanwhile, the U.S., the sponsor of the peace process, a major financier of the Israeli economy and the country that repeatedly asserts that settlements hinder peace, should come to the fore and tell Netanyahu and his team that their recalcitrant policies will only lead to gloom and doom and more bloodshed.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

NECMETIN ERBAKAN, Turkey's prime minister, came under strong criticism from a columnist in *Al Dustour* for allowing his government to conclude a series of military agreements with Israel. When Mr. Erbakan toured Iran and Libya, which are considered archenemies of the United States, the Arabs felt that the Turkish premier was turning his back to the West and forging new relations with the Arab and the Muslim nations, in the face of the U.S.-Israeli alliance, said Fakhri Kassar. But no sooner had Mr. Erbakan concluded his tour than Turkey and Israel announced fresh accords of cooperation, said the writer. First, there was an agreement between the two countries of cooperation in military technology then, an accord was signed, allowing Turkish and Israeli pilots to conduct joint military exercises and, finally, there was the agreement whereby Turkey pays Israel \$600 million for the purpose of modernising its F-4 fighter planes, said the writer. By behaving in this manner, Mr. Erbakan seems to tell the Arab and Muslim countries that he is not in the least concerned about the Palestinian issue or the Aqsa mosque or about the continued Israeli occupation of the Arab lands.

A WRITER for *Al Ra'i* daily dwelt on the current deadlock in the peace process, strongly condemning Israel's intransigence and its adamant stand with regard to Arab rights. Minister of Information Marwan Muasher carried Jordan's views to the Israeli government Wednesday, reiterating the need for Israel to abide by its commitments and pledges concerning the implementation of the Oslo accords with the Palestinians and the provisions and agreements under the Jordan-Israel peace treaty of 1994, noted Sultan Hattab. Jordan has made it clear that Israel's failure to live up to its pledges would cause direct damage to Jordanian-Israeli relations and would increase tension in the region, he added. The writer pointed out that Jordan has made it clear that it opposes the Israeli settlement programmes in the Arab territories and is expecting the Israeli government to honour all its agreements with Jordan and the Palestinians, rather than executing the desires of the extremist groups within the Israeli society. He said Jordan's position and that of the Palestinians should be backed by the Arab states and there is an imperative need for Jordan to call for an urgent meeting in Amman of the concerned Arab countries to discuss the challenge and the dangers posed by Israel's building of settlements and its refusal to honour its commitments and respect its agreements with the Arab parties.

Jordanian Perspective

Settling the displaced and refugees problem is a sine qua non for the peace process

THE FATE of the displaced and refugees has resurfaced as one of the key concerns in the uncertainties surrounding the Middle East peace process. The emergence of the issue was only natural simply because one of the immediate hopes attached to the Oslo accords of 1993 was for a quick process of allowing the Palestinians displaced by the 1967 war to return to their homes in the West Bank. Everyone thought the issue was simple since there should not be any question of West Bankers returning home as part of the agreements reached between the Palestinian leadership — the Palestine Liberation Organisation — and the government of Israel.

In fact, the prospect of returning to their homes in the West Bank was one of the key pillars that Palestinians at large welcomed in the Oslo deal; in straight terms, the deal would have been rejected outright by the Palestinian community and indeed Arab countries which host them had there been no provision for the return of the displaced, coupled with the understanding that the Palestinian leadership and Israel would seek a solution to the problem of refugees in the final status negotiations.

It would now appear that those two elements in the Oslo accords were purposely included by Israel only to secure Palestinian support for the agreements. Given the Israeli track record on settlements and the status of Jerusalem — two other key issues in the final status negotiations — it seems almost certain now that Israel had no intention ever

of living up to its commitments as undertaken in the Oslo accord.

In the context of the displaced and refugees, the latest we saw is the Israeli "boycott" of last week's round on the status of the displaced. Not that the several rounds of talks on the displaced had made any headway since discussions on the issue was launched shortly after the opening of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations in Madrid in 1991.

Indeed, around 35,000 Palestinians have been allowed to return home, in line with the Oslo accords, but we cannot overlook that Israel had to allow them in if only to help the Palestinian administrative and security structure to support Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories.

Very little has happened since then. Even the Labour-led government, which signed the accord with the PLO, balked at committing itself to recognising the displaced, let alone getting into serious negotiations over their return to their homeland. What then could we expect from the Netanyahu government?

Israel, regardless of who is in charge of its government, is gravely mistaken if it thinks that it could hoodwink the Palestinians into accepting whatever it is willing to give them — which, it seems, is limited to simple autonomy that involves cleaning their streets, running schools and hospitals and collecting just enough taxes to keep municipal work going.

Almost everyone in the Arab World, and indeed the

international community, expects the process launched by the Oslo accord to lead to an independent Palestinian state, with Arab East Jerusalem as its capital, whether Israel likes it or not.

The right of the Palestinian displaced to return home is the first that should be recognised in the process. We realise and recognise that the issue of the right of the refugees to return home or claim compensation in lieu is complicated and needs elaborate negotiations in the final status talks.

Jordan is not only a host country for the displaced and refugees; it has been also shouldering a very large burden to care for them, from its own limited sources, for decades now. As such, Jordan has every right to demand from Israel that the Jewish state live up to its commitments.

The time for diplomatic niceties and soft talk is over. The danger of renewed conflict in the Middle East is looming high on the horizon because of Israel's arrogance and stubbornness born out of its mistaken belief that its military power is the answer to Arab and Palestinian demands.

We in Jordan simply cannot sit back and let things take their course. We, Jordanians, like the citizens of all other countries in the region, have to right to enjoy a life in security, peace and stability and we are demanding just that through insisting that Israel meet the requirements of peace.

American role in peace process to continue smoothly, irrespective of team overseeing talks

By Lamis Andoni

BOSTON — As the transition of the American government to President Bill Clinton's second term continues, speculations are rife on whether special coordinator, to the Middle East peace process, Dennis Ross, will remain in office despite repeated confirmations by American administration officials that there would be no changes in the American team supervising the Israeli-Arab talks.

American officials, who had repeatedly confirmed to this reporter that Mr. Ross will remain in place, are now saying that there is a lot of uncertainty. It was not clear whether the uncertainty arose from the fact that the nominated secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, might want her own team or from Mr. Ross's decision to move on.

What is clear is that a change of the team is possible, yet not certain, contrary to the previously held view that Mr. Ross would not be replaced, to facilitate the continuity of the

American role and policies. The speculations about Mr. Ross's future plans came amid continued stalemate between the Israelis and Palestinians over the redeployment of Israeli forces from Hebron and Palestinian attempt to enlist Egyptian mediation with Israel.

Well-informed sources in Washington, who know Mr. Ross, said that the American ambassador considers the peace process "his own baby" and is unlikely to quit. Furthermore, they said that the newly designated secretary of state Madeleine Albright has no expertise in the region and would need Mr. Ross and his team to ensure smooth continuity of the American role.

The newly designated secretaries of state and defence, Mrs. Albright and William Cohen, have track records of a hard line position in favour of Israeli demands. But observers in Washington believe that regardless of the political opinions of the newly designated officials they would

have to adjust to the administration's line.

Therefore, there are speculations in Washington that if Mr. Ross chooses to leave his post, it will indicate his conclusion that the peace process had reached a dead-end. Nevertheless, those who know Mr. Ross disagree, saying that he is not the kind to give up, especially that he measures success by the continuity of the process, in spite of the faltering talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Mr. Ross has faced a setback over the last two weeks, after his team's efforts to mediate an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians hit a serious snag. The American mediation, according to American and Palestinian sources, involved a compromise proposal that was presented to both sides.

Although neither the Americans nor the Palestinians would divulge the details of the proposal, available information suggests that the American draft entails a de facto divi-

sion of Hebron, since it implies a recognition of the right of the 400 Israeli settlers to remain in the heart of the city. In return, the draft is said to contain steps that Israel should take to ensure the implementation of the Oslo accords, thus satisfying a Palestinian demand.

A senior Palestinian negotiator, contacted by phone in Gaza, confirmed that the U.S. team did support the Palestinian demand for linkage between an agreement on Hebron and steps to complete the implementation of the Oslo agreements but that the terms of the suggested agreements were unacceptable to the Palestinians.

"They (the Americans) did press for a linkage between an agreement over Hebron and an Israeli commitment to fulfill the signed agreements, yet they essentially support the Israeli terms for a Hebron arrangement," said the negotiator, who requested anonymity.

The Palestinian official said that the Americans were upset when the

Palestinians showed reluctance in accepting the compromise and that Mr. Ross kept on threatening to pull out. In the Palestinian view, Mr. Ross was deliberately exerting pressure on the Palestinians to accept the Israeli terms in return for an Israeli commitment to complete the implementation of the Oslo agreements.

But it seems that the conflict between the Palestinians and Mr. Ross did not take any form of direct verbal confrontation for as soon as the Arabic press reported that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was disgruntled with Mr. Ross, Palestinian officials rushed to deny the reports.

According to administration officials, Mr. Arafat personally called Mr. Ross's office in Washington to deny the reports. However, tension arose again when Mr. Arafat, on a European tour, called for increased Russian and French involvement in the peace

talks. But an American official told the Jordan Times later that in private meetings with Mr. Ross, the Palestinian leader did not indicate enthusiasm for a European role and that "he always emphasised the importance of the American role to the peace process."

The Palestinians then asked Egypt to help in countering the balance of the U.S. implicit support for the Israeli terms, Palestinian officials said.

A Reuters report later quoted Palestinian officials as saying that the Egyptian role angered the U.S. There was no American official reaction so far regarding that, but American sources said that Washington believes that any role that could intimidate Israel will undermine the talks. Hence American officials repeat the conventional line that "Washington is the only credible party to the Israeli" and consequently it seems that no party will be allowed to take part in the mediation.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Iraqi oil to help the starving and the ailing, give impetus to Jordan's economy

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE ARABIC dailies last week discussed the resumption, by Iraq, of pumping its oil and the impact of such a move on the Iraqis and the world markets. Other topics included domestic issues, the appointment of a new American secretary of state and the Israeli government policies.

A writer for *Al Ra'i* said that the Iraqis have the right to expect normal life for themselves, after six years of sufferings, now that they are selling their oil to the world and, therefore, the world community in general and the Security Council in particular are responsible for guaranteeing the Iraqis a decent living.

To resume normal life, the Iraqi children are in need of schooling and homes, as well as other amenities, in addition to food and medicine, said Mahmoud Rimawi.

The writer said that the basic needs of life should be secured for all the people of Iraq and not only for the Kurds living in the north of the country who, according to the Security Council, would be enjoy-

ing one third of the revenues.

The writer said that the Security Council also has a duty to see to it that the reasons for maintaining the sanctions on Iraq exist no more and must work towards a gradual end of the tragedy.

As Iraq resumes pumping oil to the outside world, one expects that the world community would be considering a gradual lifting of all sanctions on Iraq, said Mohammad Kawash, a writer for *Al Dustour*.

The Arab masses are delighted to see their Iraqi brothers and sisters returning to normal life and witnessing the end of their long sufferings, but the Arab World remains concerned over the foreign powers' intentions vis-à-vis the Iraqi nation, said the writer.

The Arab countries should realise that the foreign powers which are imposing a split oil revenues between the Iraqis and the Iraqi Kurds are keen on partitioning the Iraqi nation and therefore must be kept on supporting Iraq's unity and territorial sovereignty, said the writer.

He said the Arab countries must also demand a halt to all U.N. inspection

teams, which have been draining Arab resources after having completed their missions in Iraq. He said these resources must only be used to benefit the Arab people.

Hamadeh Faruaneh, a writer for *Al Dustour*, hailed the resumption of Iraqi oil flow to the outside world as marking the start of the end of the sufferings of the Iraqi people and a means of helping the Jordanian economy.

Jordan, which has suffered from the sanctions on Iraq all these past years, will find bigger markets for its products under the new circumstances and its Aqaba port will be witnessing greater activity connected with the importation of Iraqi goods, said the writer.

He said Jordan has been facing chronic economic and financial difficulties, resulting from the sanctions imposed on Iraq and the Israeli blockade imposed on the Palestinian territories.

With the resumption of the Iraqi oil sales, he said, Jordan's goods will be once again flowing freely towards the Iraqi markets and the economy is expected to improve, he added.

The writer voiced appre-

ciation of the government's efforts to mend fences with the Gulf states which have now resumed natural ties with Jordan, and also of its efforts to maintain and expand the country's economic and trade ties with Iraq.

Reflecting on President Clinton's appointment of Madeleine Albright as the new American secretary of state, Sultan Hattab, a writer for *Al Ra'i*, painted a gloomy picture of the future American-Arab relations.

Mrs. Albright represents the traditional American school that supports the world Zionists and is totally prejudiced against the Arabs and their rights, said the writer. Indeed, the Zionist lobby in the United States has succeeded in placing Mrs. Albright at the head of the State Department in order to prevent President Clinton from exerting any pressure on the Jewish state to comply with the U.N. resolutions and the requirements of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, said the writer.

With such a personality handling Washington's foreign affairs, he added, the Arabs can expect no fair

handling of the Middle East problem but rather more hostile American policies towards the Arab World in general and the Palestinians in particular.

A writer for *Al Dustour* urged the present parliament to introduce two main amendments to existing laws during this last regular session that precedes the 1997 general elections.

Saleh Qallab said that the present parliament must introduce a new and modern elections law, catering to the needs of the majority of the people and not benefiting one group alone, and dispose of the temporary law of one-person, one-vote, that has been strongly criticised by all factions and political groups.

The writer also said that the present parliament should demand that no serving deputy become a minister, in order to prevent him from seeking personal gains in future elections from such a prominent post in the executive authority.

The writer said past experience had proved that a deputy with a ministerial post is usually keen on giving his relatives jobs, or helping them one way or another, to ensure their votes and their assistance

in the next general elections.

Ibrahim Absi discussed the Israeli anti-peace policies, saying that Benjamin Netanyahu is leading Israel to a real disaster since he is paving the ground for open confrontations with the Arabs.

Mr. Netanyahu is trying to deceive the world by claiming that he works for peace while he continues the drive to build more settlements, to strengthen the hands of the Jewish extremist groups and pursues a policy of starving the Arab population, said the writer.

The behaviour of the present Israeli government not only towards the Palestinians but the world at large, particularly the Arab countries close to Israel, clearly proves that the man is determined to kill all chances of permanent peace and peaceful coexistence between the Israelis and the Arabs, he added.

The writer warned that Mr. Netanyahu, who now feels cornered by the pressure exercised on his government by the world, particularly the Arab states, might resort to an open war with Syria and Lebanon, under any pretext.

Fourth season of excavations clarifies important architectural aspects of Petra's Southern Temple

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

For the fourth year in a row, a team of archaeologists directed by Dr. Martha Sharp Joukowsky of Brown University (Rhode Island, U.S.) has excavated the Southern Temple at Petra, and has once again generated significant new information about Nabataean architecture and cult.

"Not only was there a wealth of finds including coins, an inscription, and ceramics," she told the Jordan Times in a recent interview, "but there were extraordinary revelations about Nabataean temple architecture and a sculptural programme that includes richly adorned capitals embellished with fruits and vines as well as elephant heads."

The temple, now known as the Great Southern Temple, must have been one of the most important holy places in the entire Nabataean realm, due to its size, decoration and very strategic position in the centre of the Nabataean capital city.

The large temple precinct on three levels is located south of the colonnaded street and just south-west of the Arch of the Temenos Gate (the gate at the western end of the street that leads into the temenos, or holy precinct, around Qasr Al Binti).

Now largely tumbled except for excavated walls and some columns that were re-erected after excavation, the Southern Temple complex includes a stepped propylaea (or monumental entrance), a lower temenos (sacred enclosure), a monumental grand staircase that leads up to an upper temenos, and the temple building itself which is surrounded by columns. The temple building had four large, 15-metre-high columns along its front (north) facade flanked by another pair of columns, all of which may have carried a triangular pediment and entablature — making the full height of the temple at least 19 metres.

The Lower Temenos measured nearly 60 metres from east to west.

The most significant architectural features uncovered this year included the discovery in the Lower Temenos of east and west triple colonnades adorned with a total of 96 columns, as well as an elegant apsed East Exedra with interior buttresses that matches the already excavated West Exedra. These findings "indicate a Nabataean penchant for formal symmetry," Dr. Joukowsky said, adding that the large size of the entire temple complex — over 7000 metres square — was also noteworthy in terms of known Nabataean temples.

This year's dig also defined several other architectural features: the temple stairs leading from the west Lower Temenos sacred area to the Upper Temenos sacred area, the eastern peripheral wall of the complex, and an arched passage leading to the "Lower Market" to the east.

In the temple proper, the interior pronaos, or entrance area, has been completely excavated, as have the north-western interior wall and the founding levels of three of the eight western columns. Features of the

"Adyton", or principal sacred chamber, included the complete excavation of the east and west vaulted stairways and the large west vaulted chamber to some 4 metres in depth, where a fragmented inscription was unearthed. The inscription in Latin was reused as a floor paving stone in the Byzantine period; originally it seems to have been a formulaic text from the 1st or 2nd century AD, probably honouring a suitably important deity or emperor.

On the south-east side of the complex, the outer east wall, the south-eastern double engaged corner column, and the inner columnar wall were all defined. "These factors combine to suggest that the temple (south) end of the temple complex was three-storied," Dr. Joukowsky said.

Particularly noteworthy was the discovery of the upper courses of a major east-west semi-circular wall opening into the central cella of the temple.

This apparently large, bay-like structure in the middle of the temple may define the Adyton, which housed the holy of holies, and promises to be a major architectural component of the temple, Dr. Joukowsky added.

We still do not know for sure which deity was worshipped there. A carved, over life-sized sandstone head of the goddess Tyche recovered from the 1995 dig is the only hint of the possible house deity; she wears a diadem with the crown of the city gates.

This year's excavations have not changed the previous working hypothesis that the temple complex was built in the beginning of the 1st Century AD; the date is based mainly on stylistic comparisons with other, well dated Nabataean monuments, such as the Khazneh, and the Temple of the Winged Lions across the valley, overlooking the colonnaded street from the north.

The many recovered cultural remains (coins, pottery, sculptures, architectural fragments, lamps, painted stucco, and Roman glass) show that the temple precinct was used for some 400 years, in the Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods; they also reveal the combination of indigenous Nabataean artistic traditions with the imported classical spirit.

Numerous fragments of carved elephant heads originally decorated capitals of the Lower Temenos. The elephant heads are extremely rare, perhaps even unique, in Jordan, though carved stones from other Nabataean temple sites (Khirbet Tannur and Khirbet Brak) may also be elephant heads. The heads have relatively small ears, suggesting Indian elephants — but also raising questions about how Hellenistic or Nabataean sculptors would have seen such elephants, Dr. Joukowsky says.

The scholars examining the site have not been able to determine how it was used in the Roman and Byzantine periods. Nor have they come up with a good answer to why they have excavated many Byzantine lamps, but have not found any Byzantine coins. Byzantine period walls have been excavated within the temple structure, and walls between the columns of the central holy chamber may have been Late Roman/Early Byzantine additions designed to strengthen the columns. It is impossible now to say exactly when the temple collapsed, though it must have been during one of the major earthquakes that hit southern Jordan in antiquity.

Because of its location, height and decoration, the Nabataean temple would have stood out sharply against the rose-red natural environment and blue sky. Almost every part of the temple complex that was visible from the outside was either exquisitely decorated with carved architectural elements or covered with white stucco or plaster. The visual impact of the temple would have been accentuated by its large size of 28 x 40 metres. The stucco decoration in parts of the temple was repeatedly repaired and renovated, which means it is difficult to date. Much new stucco material was unearthed this year, including fragments from painted walls, columns, and architectural embellishments showing very sophisticated work. Some crude paintings were also discovered, showing only fragments of some not very sophisticated works.

The Lower Temenos was paved with large white hexagonal stones that rested on a subterranean network of tunnels or covered channels that has been traced from the forecourt of the temple. The system radiates out to all adjacent areas, including the street, the walls, the baths, the propylaea steps and other directions. The canals are stepped in places and are almost large enough for an adult to walk through. They were repaired twice (once poorly, during the Byzantine period) and may date from late in the complex's life.

Their purpose is not clear. They probably served to keep the temple precinct dry by draining away water, but could have been the terminus of a municipal canalisation system that brought water to the city-centre from outlying springs. The canals system was partly excavated and partly traced by using ground-penetrating radar under the direction of Professor Terry Tullis of Brown University. The excavations have also shown that the Lower Temenos was built on six metres of deposits that included arch springs and handsome Nabataean walls, indicating that "the lower temenos had an earlier monumental construction phase," Dr. Joukowsky said.

"This also leads us to suspect that there was an earlier Nabataean access to the temple's lower temenos from the area of the colonnaded street," she said. The adjacent baths are also about six metres deep, and it is likely that some relationship existed between the temple and the baths.

One possible explanation for the arched subterranean passages beneath the temenos is that an earlier temple was approached from the street level through two arched side aisle entrances; these would have been filled in and covered up to provide the foundation for the paved Lower Temenos during the later phase of the temple's life. The second phase of the temple coincided with the Khazneh, according to the similarities in the architectural style and the sculpted relief figures on the columns.

Continued reversible reconstruction of columns was undertaken in 1996, and plans are now underway for consolidation of architectural elements that have been imperilled both from 2,000 years of erosion as well as by recent excavations.

The Southern Temple excavations will continue in 1997. They have been sponsored by Brown University, in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, and with logistical support and assistance by the American Centre for Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman.



The Southern Temple after this year's excavation. The colonnaded street and arched gate are visible at the bottom-right of the photo, from where a monumental staircase leads up (to the left) towards the Lower Temenos in the centre of the photo; the Upper Temenos and the temple building itself are visible in the centre-left of the photo (photo courtesy of Martha Sharp Joukowsky)

Jordan, Israel have 'serious differences' over settlements

(Continued from page 1)

he said.

"We are talking about an atmosphere, a negative one that has been there in the area for some time because of the impasse, because of the delay in implementing agreements, because of statements such as ones on settlement policy."

Mr. Netanyahu earlier reiterated at the funeral of two Israelis killed by Palestinian suspects near Ramallah in the West Bank that Israel would continue to expand Jewish settlements in the region.

On Wednesday, Dr. Muasher also condemned the attack on settlers near the Beit El as "barbaric" and "cowardly."

During his meeting with Mr. Levy, Dr. Muasher sought assurances Israel would stick to the Oslo timetable and continue the peace process beyond a Hebron pullback.

"Muasher wanted to be sure that Hebron is not last step in the peace process," according to sources familiar with the conversation and quoted by the Jerusalem Post.

Dr. Muasher and Mr. Levy spoke of cooperation and the strengthening of ties. Dr. Muasher invited the foreign minister to visit Jordan. Some believe Mr. Levy may visit as soon as next week, the Post said.

Dr. Muasher also invited Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to visit Jordan.

Mr. Mordechai was quoted as telling Dr. Muasher that any settlement building was due to "natural growth" and that there was no intention of setting up new settlements.

Meeting at the defence ministry in Tel Aviv, Mr. Mordechai told Dr. Muasher that Israel was interested in advancing the peace process with the Palestinians, but added he "did not

understand" Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's unwillingness to close a deal on the redeployment in Hebron, sources told the Post.

He added that King Hussein understood the Middle East well and said he appreciated the Monarch's sense that the peace process must continue.

"Peace between Israel and Jordan has strategic importance and everything must be done in order for this peace to be a warm and close peace between two nations," Mr. Mordechai said. He added this warm peace would also enhance negotiations with the Palestinians.

On Wednesday, Dr. Muasher visited the Knesset where he met with Speaker Dan Tichon and Arab MKs. It was the first visit by a Jordanian minister to the Knesset.

Uday Hussein recovering

(Continued from page 1)

and television station and the daily newspaper Babel. He is also a director of the National Theatre Institute.

A lover of fast cars, he is chairman of the country's Olympic Committee and the Football Federation.

In addition, he is head of a force known as "Saddam's fighters," a 25,000-strong paramilitary group created in 1994 to protect the president.

He has been married twice. His first marriage, to the daughter of Vice-President Izzat Ibrahim, ended in divorce and little more than a year later he married the daughter of Saddam Hussein's half-brother Barzan Al Tikriti.

After studying engineering, Uday obtained a doctorate in military science in just 10 months, a diploma that usually requires three years of study.

Apart from Uday, his second child, Saddam Hussein has one other son, Qusai, in charge of the president's personal security and three daughters.

Wafiq Samarra, a former Iraqi intelligence chief who was reached by telephone in Damascus from Dubai, said hundreds of people were arrested following Thursday's attack which he said was carried out by several gunmen.

"Based on my information, several armed men opened fire on Uday at the same time as he was driving in the Al Mansur neighbourhood" where he goes to meet women, Mr. Samarra told AFP.

"Around 500 people were arrested overnight as part of the investigation," said Mr. Samarra, who was head of Iraq's military intelligence until he defected to Syria in 1994.

It was the second attack against Uday in six months. Mr. Samarra said. "Last June, Uday was the target of a similar attack carried out by a group of Iraqi opposition members, who were all arrested and executed."

The June attack was not confirmed by officials in Baghdad. Al Mansour is both a chic residential area and a business district, usually busy on Thursday evenings.

The official media gave no update on the attack on Friday, with state-run radio and television running traditional fare such as readings of the Koran and children's programmes.

There was no visible increase in security in the Iraqi capital.

A witness to the attack said Friday that Uday's head was covered in blood after the attack.

The witness, who requested anonymity, could not say whether Uday's apparent head injuries were caused by a bullet or from a shattered car windscreen.

Other Iraqi sources said five gunmen who ambushed Uday managed to escape. Among those arrested were 200 members of a Republic Guard elite unit based near the presidential palace, apparently under suspicion, they said.

Israeli government decides to give more incentives to settlers

(Continued from page 1)

even one house to a Jewish settlement would be a violation of his peace deals with Israel.

"Peace and security will not be achieved by making this area (the West Bank) a 'national priority region'. It is simply a joke," said former Housing Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer, a member of the previous Labour-led government.

"Talking about building new settlements and thousands of housing units is tantamount to ending the Oslo (peace) process," he told the radio.

Since taking office in June, the Netanyahu government has given the go-ahead for the construction of thousands of homes in existing settlements but has yet to meet the demands of settler leaders to establish new outposts.

Israel's Jerusalem municipal planning commission approved a plan earlier in the week to build 132 homes in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem. It now needs ministerial approval to go ahead.

Annan to be next U.N. chief

(Continued from page 1)

details were immediately available.

Mr. Weston also paid tribute to U.N. chief Boutros Ghali, who last week had put his candidacy on hold to allow other votes to go ahead. The 74-year-old Egyptian was vetoed by the United States on Nov. 19. Mr. Annan, 58, led in all

seven previous unofficial ballots among four African candidates, three of them from French-speaking countries, but was opposed each time by France.

The council's five permanent members — the United States, Russia, Britain, China and France — have a veto in any official vote.

Astra launches Organza from Givenchy



ASTRA ESTABLISHMENT For Commercial Agencies General Manager Imad Al Tayyah said in a press conference on Wednesday that Organza perfume, a Givenchy product, is now in the Jordanian market. In its complex orchestration, Organza harmonises melodies of both the greatest variety and strength. Whilst intoxicating, the perfume asserts itself — fundamentally pure, natural and sensual. It is floral yet carnal: the first chord blooms in the freshness and green of Sap that is revived by the merest contact with the skin. The touches of Gardenia of Tuberose are underlined by the warm notes of Ylang-Ylang and ensure these virtual alternatives deep roots in reality. The fragrances mingle to soothe, seduce and invite dreaming, are built upon the woody scent of Cedar and refined hints of Spices, Amber and Vanilla. Attending the conference were Francois Janin and Benoit Rouquayrol de Boisse from Givenchy, who are currently visiting Jordan on the occasion of putting on display this new perfume in the Jordanian market. They answered the questions of reporters and said that it is suitable for its prices and that it was first put on sale in the French market in September and later on in several Middle East countries. It is now available in pharmacies and perfume shops as well as Astra's exhibition at the Gardens Street (at Bahjat Gardens) in western Amman.

Jordanians divided over separation of executive and legislative authorities

(Continued from page 1)

to a ministerial appointment, he said.

Other observers have also attributed the high number of contestants to aspirations for joining the cabinet.

In the same line, opponents of "fusion" say that the government tries to ensure parliamentary support for its policies by "co-opting" deputies and promising them cabinet posts.

In an article he wrote in the Arabic press recently, political science Professor Mohammad Mahasneh said the separation of powers would cost the government an effective pressure mechanism and subject it to greater scrutiny. Under a system in which deputies do not participate in the executive, the government will have to be more accountable to parliament, he said.

According to a former prime minister and current deputy, Taher Al Masri, another proponent of the separation of powers, deputies holding ministerial posts are mostly concerned with furthering the interests of their constituents, "often adopting more parochial, tribal positions rather than positions that are in the interest of the nation as a whole."

Mr. Masri told the Jordan Times that "the practices of

members of parliament who become ministers are short-sighted, concentrating on working for their districts only. Their perspective is not wide."

"They (come under) a lot of pressure from their constituency" to deliver favours in return for their votes," he said. Payback can take the form of appointments, which often comes at the expense of merit and negatively affects the efficiency of government, he said.

Former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali, the only premier not to include deputies in his government since the reintroduction of parliamentary life in 1989, insists that the separation of powers "is a must and leads to better government."

Dr. Majali, who later brought in deputies to his government when he needed a strong parliamentary mandate for signing the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, added that members of parliament should resign from the legislature if they want to hold cabinet positions.

Dr. Majali told the Jordan Times that "a parliament member who is also a minister has to serve his constituency, sometimes at the expense of the general public. It will be very hard not to do so."

"If you are a parliamentarian of one district and then a minister, how will

you be re-elected if you do not (serve) your constituents?" he added.

But supporters of keeping the current system argue that there are positive aspects to allowing a parliamentarian to hold a cabinet post.

A deputy in government will be better placed to monitor the government, Deputy Nader Thuhairat was quoted as telling Al Ra'i daily. The deputy will also be far more acquainted with the positions and perspectives of the people, the constituents, and parliamentarian colleagues. This will enable him to work more effectively in government, already knowing what is needed, he said.

Another factor supporters of the separation of power cite as a reason to prohibit deputies from holding cabinet posts is the current weakness of political parties. In mature democracies, where party institutions are well entrenched and pluralism encouraged, a government is formed from the political party that gains the majority in parliament.

In Jordan, where parliamentary life was only resumed in 1989, and parties legalised in 1993, a viable political party system has not had time to evolve. Deputies rely heavily on personal popularity for election rather than on the basis of a national

political programme. Mr. Masri, who is against amending the Constitution but is in favour of enforcing a separation of powers through tradition and practice at this point says "We need to practise separation for the coming years until a solid party system and a modern electoral law are developed."

Mr. Masri believes the separation of powers is necessitated by the prevailing political environment and should be enforced only when political parties are mature enough and allowed through the elections law to have parliamentary majority and form governments.

Centrist Deputy Turad Al Qadi agrees.

"With the absence of party institutions and the immaturity of political parties, I do not see that grouping the deputies and ministers is a good option...separation between the institutions of the state and its authorities is imperative," Dr. Qadi told a local paper.

Another negative aspect created by "fusion," according to Dr. Majali, is that it leads to a situation where deputy-ministers wield greater power than those holding one position. "Other ministers in the cabinet who do not have a parliamentary position have less power. This creates an imbalance. There is no equilibrium. Some have

greater authority," he said. But Deputy Fawzi Tuaimiah cites the law to defend the inclusion of parliamentarians in the government. The Constitution, he says, sanctions this practice which "serves the interests of the country." The problem as he sees it is that certain personal practices have weakened the positive aspects of this principle. Just because some individuals choose to abuse the system to serve electoral purposes and grant personal favours for their constituents, he says, does not mean that the principle in itself is bad. "It needs to be developed and used properly," he told a daily newspaper.

While it is still unclear whether the King will maintain the current system or introduce a separation of powers, observers say it is almost certain that the change, if it occurs, will not be effected through amending the Constitution.

Observers and officials say the Constitution, which does not ban or call for including parliamentarians in the government, will not be touched at this point. Any change in the current system, they say, will be done through initiating a new practice which the King could do in his letter of designation to the prime minister.

WTO meeting sets path to freer trade in 21st century

SINGAPORE (R) — Ministers from 128 nations hammered out last-minute deals on Friday to seal a sweeping pact to free commerce in information technology, help the poor and

set the agenda of world trade talks for the rest of the century. An eleven-hour agreement to boost the world's 48 poorest countries ensured passage of a minis-

terial declaration that crowned the final day of the inaugural Dec. 9-13 meeting of the fledgling World Trade Organisation (WTO). The ministerial conference has been an out-

standing event in all respects. Singapore's Trade Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, the chairman of conference, said to applause from fellow ministers as he wrapped up a week of

intense negotiations.

The eight-page declaration adopted at the closing session forms a blueprint for the future agenda of the WTO, including working groups to study the links between trade, competition and cross-border investment.

"I regard it as astonishing that we've been able to bring together such a diverse group of countries and get agreement on a text that is not just papering over the cracks but genuinely important," European trade commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, told a news conference.

The conference, with its ground-breaking information technology agreement (ITA) to scrap tariffs on the rapidly growing \$600 billion world market in computer-related goods, had boosted the strength and profile of the trade body, he said.

"We regard the conference as having been a huge international success which has given vital boost to the strength and profile of the world trade organisation," Sir Brittan said.

Ministers and economists said the ITA would give a powerful boost to the information-technology industry, especially in Asia, and eventually lead to lower prices for a vast range of consumer goods that use electronic parts.

But delegates said the triumph of clinching a pact

which about 30 countries were expected to sign on Friday, would have been tarnished without agreement on the conference's other main agenda item — the link between trade and labour standards.

A hard-fought compromise emerged late on Thursday that had just been enough to enable North and South to proclaim victory. "We got everything," WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero said late on Thursday, as he emerged tired but happy after days of round-the-clock negotiations.

Developing nations, led by India, Pakistan and Egypt, had refused to countenance any interference by the WTO in the area of workers' rights, fearing it would undermine their chief comparative advantage in world trade — cheap labour.

The United States and a string of European countries, by contrast, were equally insistent in clamouring for action to help 250 million child workers, mainly in the Third World, and to improve sweatshop conditions.

The final declaration satisfies poor countries because it firmly rejects the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes and says the International Labour Organisation (ILO), based like the WTO in Geneva, is the competent body to deal with them. "I

think that the agreements on labour standards does mark a breakthrough in the worldwide dialogue on this delicate but vital subject," Sir Brittan said. "We have put our foot in the door."

Washington can point to a commitment in the declaration to observe internationally recognised labour standards and to a promise of continued collaboration between the WTO and the ILO. "If the Americans hadn't got an agreement on labour, they couldn't have gone back to Washington," a Japanese official said.

A last-minute surprise was agreement on an action plan to boost trade with the world's least developed countries.

The move would help the world's 48 poorest nations to improve their capacity to respond to the opportunities offered by the trading system, ministers said.

"One of the things of which the European Union can be most proud is our ability to snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat at the last minute on issue of helping the least developed countries," Sir Brittan said.

Next year's objective must be to grant to the poorest countries duty-free access to the markets of all developed and more advanced developing countries and, as appropriate, to the markets of other developing countries, he said.

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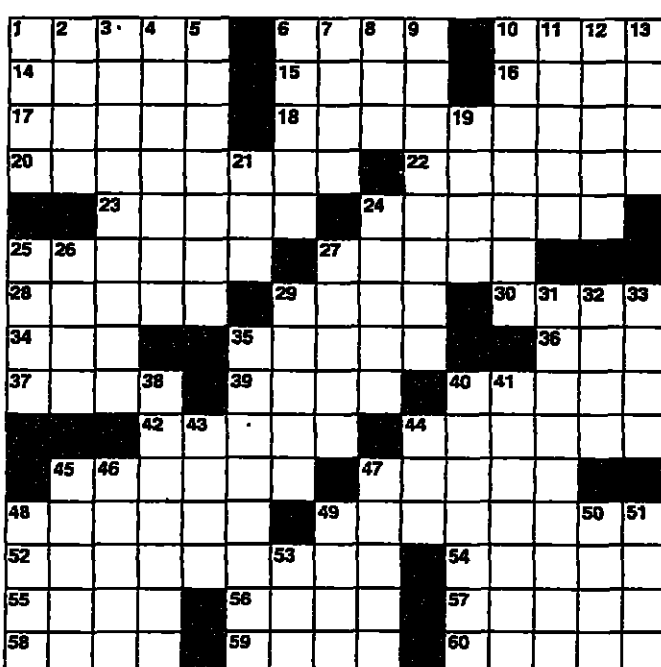
Major Currencies & Cross Rates										Prices as at 13/12/96 20:24	
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF		
US Dollar		1.5460	0.6028	1.3178	113.80	1.3624	1523.00	1.7344	5.2160		
DE Mark	0.6486		0.3894	0.8519	73.59	0.8807	984.49	1.3218	3.3735		
GB Sterling	1.6590	2.5683		2.1868	168.20	2.2602	2527.27	2.8781	6.6554		
CH Franc	0.7596	117.25	0.4566		86.36	1.0333	1155.54	131.87	3.4950		
JP Yen	0.0088	1.3573	0.0289	1.1567		1.1961	13.39	152.33	4.5795		
CA Dollar	0.7340	1.1342	0.4438	0.9388	1.20		1124.32	1.2016	3.4425		
IT Lira	0.0007	1.0134	0.3949	0.8864	1341.38	0.8930		11.37	3.4190		
NL Guilder	0.5766	48.09	0.3470	75.93	45.55	0.7848	278.28		3.0066		
FR Franc	0.1917	0.2862	0.1154	25.2443	21.80	0.2610	33.24	33.2400			

Energy			* JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Unit	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	114.75	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (c/lbs)	1383	Spot	GB Sterling	1.1654	1.1712
Sugar (c/lbs)	304.7	Spot	DE Mark	0.4693	0.4616
Wheat (c/lbs)	129	Spot	CH Franc	0.8391	0.8418
Soya (c/lbs)	21.71	Spot	FR Franc	0.1359	0.1366
Tee (c/lbs)	125	Spot	JP Yen	0.0273	0.0304
Barley (c/lbs)	2.16	Spot	NL Guilder	0.4694	0.4714
Rice (c/lbs)	470	Spot	IT Lira	0.4638	0.4661

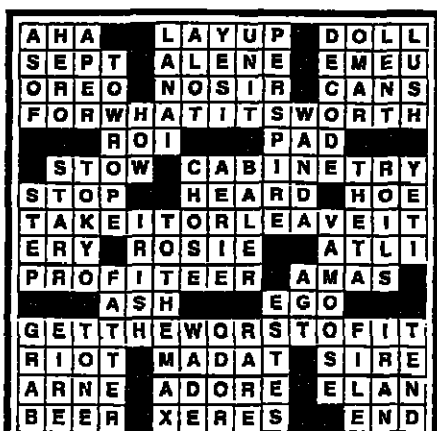
* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Emma of "Dynasty"
 - Military service
 - Quarter of a bushel
 - Braid
 - City on the Juma
 - Ireland
 - French river
 - Press, radio and TV
 - Turncoat
 - Serving dish
 - "Tempest" spirit
 - Baffling questions
 - Bring back
 - Drays
 - "Greasy"
 - Neale
 - Heroic epic
 - Duck
 - SL
 - Play back
 - Ring master
 - Breathing: abbr.
 - Fiddler's need
 - Treatise
 - Hesitated
 - Concurred
 - Post Alighieri
 - Northern natives
 - Steadfast
 - Pilgrims' Indian friend
 - Baseball cap
 - Acarid
 - Italian noble family
 - January: Sp.
 - Lulu
 - Letter opener
 - Remains idle



by Eugene Puffenberger



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- DOWN
- Nail with a hole
 - I cannot tell
 - Overwhelming
 - Barite, e.g.
 - Aspic
 - Bactrian
 - Lab gel

- Garson's "Miniver"
- Rural
- Member of the nobility
- Bedding down
- Vociferates
- Shakespearean actor
- Necessity
- Aviv
- Beeper
- Grow
- Roof feature
- Sly
- J.C. or Sam
- People who knead people?
- Author Wiesel
- Twist
- Appraised
- Reader
- Rehearsed
- Draw a profile of
- trap for
- de deux

- Actor Delon
- Story of daring
- Discourage
- Shot and shell
- Hayworth or Moreno
- Legal wrong
- Cupid
- Sugar suffix

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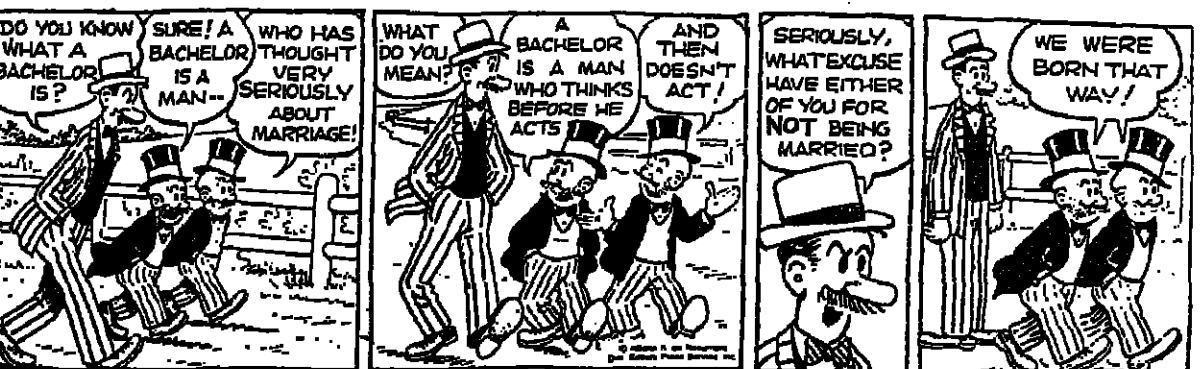
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make practical plans today which can bring more happiness into your life. Don't be concerned with your romantic life later this evening, since you can make plans to have a wonderful time with your mate at home or in a restaurant.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have to be more thoughtful and kind with a fellow associate today, since he or she could have important information which is critical to your career activities. Make yourself more charming to the public.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a good day today to make your home clean and sparkling, since you might never know when close friends and unexpected guests decide to drop in. Make any improvements which are needed to make it pleasing.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Get your talents working more efficiently today so that you can gain greater benefits from your efforts. Later this evening will be good for getting together with fellow associates and devise some plan of action.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You may have company tonight which can give you needed information, concerning an important project so make every effort to make them feel welcome. Today you can seek out a bigwig and gain his or her opinion.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Go to the right sources today for the advice you need which will bring you happiness with the one you love. Later tonight you can go out on the town with close friends and have a wonderful time together.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Study your possessions today and know how to get better returns from them. Make your personal life more satisfying and successful through your efforts and the assistance of fellow associates who have been helpful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You like to get all the information you can today on anything which is of interest to you, so do it quickly and efficiently. Later this evening you can meet with knowledgeable people and seek their advice for your career.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Do whatever will most please the one you love today, however, do so secretly and surprise him, or her with your efforts. Later tonight will be good for you to associate with close friends and have fun out on the town.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A good friend can today give you a good suggestion on how to gain a cherished longing, so make every effort to listen to what is being presented. Tonight you can be with your loved ones and have a good time together.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be careful of your actions in the outside world today and safeguard reputation against harm and thereby you can become quite successful. Don't waste any money on unnecessary items which have no practical purpose.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study into new interests today and know how profitable they may be before you commit yourself to anything, which could have some risk connected. Later this evening you can relax with your loved ones and enjoy the togetherness.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon.

South Korea-Japan final remains firmly on menu

ASIAN CUP

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The mouth-watering prospect of a South Korea-Japan final in the Asian Cup remains firmly on the menu — thanks to Japan's dramatic last minute win over China in their final Group C match.

The win ended Korea's fears of failing to live up to their pre-tournament billing as one of the favourites and being sent home in disgrace after the group qualifying matches.

For the country who has upheld Asia's reputation in the World Cup finals, with a record second to none having qualified for the last three finals, it would have been an unbearable humiliation.

Instead the two long time bitter enemies have the opportunity to battle it out for the title 'the best in Asia' in the final here on Dec. 21.

Adding spice to such a final is the bitter rivalry the two nations displayed in the 'war' for to host the 2002 World Cup.

A powerful last minute lobbying campaign allowed South Korea to derail Japan's dream of becoming the first Asian country to be sole host to the 2002 World Cup.

Up to six months before the vote was taken by FIFA's executive committee in Zurich last May, Japan, firmly supported by FIFA's autocratic President Joao Havelange, looked certain winners.

But after some of the most vicious campaigning ever seen in FIFA's history it was clear three days before the vote was due to be taken Korea would win if came to a straight vote. A shaken Havelange, who had vowed that co-hosting would only

happen over his dead body, was forced to accept sharing to save Japan's face.

When the decision was announced the Japanese looked stunned, unable to understand what had gone wrong.

Korea's influential executive committee member Chung Mong Jong cheekily suggested straight after the vote that the two sides should play each other to decide who should host the final.

FIFA, fearing a mini-war on the football pitch, quickly put paid to such an idea, forcing through their own solution — Korea would host the opening ceremony and the opening match and Tokyo would have the final.

But although Chung's proposal was knocked down, the possibility of Japan and Korea meeting each other to decide the Asian Cup final could produce the most dramatic final in the tournament's 30-year history.

However to reach the final both sides have still to win two more matches.

Korea face the most difficult task. Their quarter-final confrontation against Iran is no walk over.

Iran are one of the most solid teams in the championship and Western coaches here observing the tournament are convinced that Iran has the potential to make it to the 1998 World Cup finals in France.

A victory over Iran will almost certainly pit the Koreans against two-time Asian Cup champions Saudi Arabia. FIFA observers are unsmiling that so far, the Saudis are the most impressive team in the cup.

"They have several players who could make it in



China's Wei Qun is airborne for the ball over Japan's Naoki Soma (number 3), scorer of the only goal for Japan, Thursday in their match in the Asia Cup in Al Ain. Japan won 1-0 (Reuters photo)

Europe's top leagues. The only reason they don't travel abroad is that they earn so much by staying in Saudi Arabia," said one European FIFA observer.

The Saudis are on a mission to wipe the memory of their 1-0 defeat by Japan in the Asian Cup final in Hiroshima four years ago. "We want Japan in the final so we can put the record straight," said one senior Saudi official. Japan have the easier half

of the quarter-final draw, playing an unimpressive Kuwait.

Victory over Kuwait would pit them against either the United Arab Emirates or Iraq, neither of them who should pose an unsurmountable mountain for the defending champions.

Although Japan finished top of their group with three straight victories two of the wins came in the dying minutes. Two goals in the

last five minutes gave them a 2-1 win over Uzbekistan, playing in their first ever Asian Cup finals, and it took a 90th minute goal in their final match against China to keep Japan's unbeaten record intact.

Korea have also had their problems. Following a draw with the UAE in their opening match, a game they have sealed in the opening 20 minutes. Korea have got worse instead of better.

But after five days of rest before their quarter-final clash against Iran, the Koreans should have had time to sort out their problems and reveal to the rest of Asia why they are the dominant Asian force on the world soccer stage. Should Japan or Korea win they will create a piece of Asian Cup history. While Iran and Saudi Arabia have won in "Asia" Asia, Iran in Bangkok in 1972 and the Saudis in Singapore in 1984, no "Asian" Asian side has ever won in the Arab World.

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FIRST DIVISION BASKETBALL

Ahli beat Orthodoxi, give Jazireh the lead

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The First Division Basketball Championship witnessed two exciting games Thursday with Ahli's win over Al Orthodoxi (70-61) and Al Jazireh over Al Jaleel (71-57).

The highly awaited match between Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi ended with a striking win for Al Ahli 70-61 (36-24).

Al Ahli's performance surpassed all expectations as all bets went to Al Orthodoxi who played a great match against long-time rival Al Ahli but without success.

Al Ahli's performance was impressive around the clock, capitalising on Marwan Saedi who successfully guarded Orthodoxi's top star Hilal

Barakat. Al Orthodoxi was stunned by Al Ahli's performance and was unable to match Al their scoring abilities, throughout the first half which ended 36-24.

In the second half, Al Orthodoxi tried to make some changes by indulging Ehab Emsieh who took things into his own hand to reduce the difference to a mere four points in the last 5 minutes.

Al Ahli, however, kept the pressure against Al Orthodoxi's defence to end the match with a precious 70-61 win.

In Thursday's other

match, Al Jazireh overcame Al Jaleel 71-57 (43-30) thus advancing to the top of championship standings with 5 points followed by Al Ahli in the second place and leaving Al Orthodoxi in the third.

Although Al Jazireh won the match, Al Jaleel gave their opponents a hard time in the defence area, thus forcing Saqr Khirfan to concentrate on three-point throwing which helped them through the match.

Sunday's matches:

Jazireh-Ahli
Orthodoxi-Jaleel

Standings

Team	P	W	L	SP	SA	Pts
Jazireh	2	2	1	210	185	5
Ahli	2	2	1	209	185	5
Orthodoxi	2	2	1	211	200	5

Mohammad Dawoud braves weather to win National Rally

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Mohammad Al Dawoud captured the first place in his Ford Escort Cosworth RS 4x4 with a total time of 00:58:48 and with an average speed of 90.71 in the season-ending Jordan National Rally Friday.

Ahmad Al Dawoud came second in a Ford Escort Cosworth RS 4x4 with 00:59:08 and with an average speed of 90.20 and in the third place Ibrahim

Attaali in a Ford Sierra Cosworth 4x4 with 1:07:22 and 79.18.

After a heated competition in a cold weather Mohammad Al Dawoud was able to beat Farris Bustami who had an accident in his Toyota Celica GT4 that forced him to abandon the race to Mohammad Al Dawoud.

After this win Ahmad Dawoud secured the second place in the 1996 Driver's Open Championship.

Marouf Abu Samra was able to keep the title

although he did not take part in this event.

Bad weather conditions did not stop the drivers from taking part in the rally.

A number of 12 cars participated in the National Rally which was organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

The rally consisted of three special stages covering the distance of 88 kilometres, passing through Daba'a, Khan Zabit and Sawqqa. A prize winning ceremony will be held today at RACJ headquarters.

Seles has broken finger

MIAMI, Florida (AFP) — Monica Seles has a broken right ring finger that will have to be in plaster for at least two weeks, her agent International Management Group said Thursday.

Seles suffered the injury while practicing in Europe two weeks ago, but did not have it examined right away.

The injury is only the latest to hinder Seles, who was forced to withdraw from the WTA tour championships last month after aggravating an injury to her left shoulder.

Seles, a left-hander, injured the shoulder en route to victory in the 1996 Australian Open. The injury forced her out of several tournaments, and also hampered her serve for much of the year.

Subaru stick with winning formula

LONDON (AFP) — Former world champion Colin McRae, Swede Kenneth Eriksson and Italian star Piero Liatti have all been retained by Subaru for next year's World Rally Championship, the Japanese team confirmed on Thursday.

The three were kept on after winning the Manufacturers' Championship for a second

successive year.

The planned team strategy is for McRae, Scotland's 1995 world champion, to contest all 14 rounds of the series and team director David Richards declared: "I believe we have the most formidable combination with Kenneth, Piero and Colin — a mix that can win the drivers' and manufacturers' titles."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & YAMAM HIRSH
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THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ 10 7 4 2
♥ K J 6 5 3
♦ K 8
♣ K 7

EAST
♠ A J 9 8 6 5
♥ 10 7 4
♦ A 9 5
♣ A 9 5

SOUTH
♠ 9 8
♥ A Q 10 7 3
♦ A Q 2
♣ A Q J

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
17 Pass Pass Pass
67 Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Four of ♠.

Eager to get on to the next hand, rubber-bridge players will often concede one or two down to get a hand over with when the contract is 'clearly hopeless'. That can be a very expensive habit, as this hand proves.

Most modern players would have no problem opening the South hand with two no trump despite the fact that the spade suit is only partially stopped. They require secure stoppers only in three suits, not all four

in days gone by. That might have led to the same contract, which was reached quickly when North stretched a little to make a forcing jump raise in hearts.

After winning the opening lead with dummy's king of clubs, declarer drew trumps, gazed dejectedly at the closed hand and dummy, then conceded two spade tricks. The defenders entered 100 points above the line.

Certainly, declarer rated to lose two spade tricks but, in fact, once a club was led the slam cannot be defeated as the cards lie. Declarer simply draws trumps, cashes out the minor-suit winners and then holds a singleton king of spades; the defender must win (if East overtakes, declarer's queen of spades becomes a trick), and return a minor suit. That enables declarer to ruff on the table and discard the queen of spades, holding the losers to one in spades.

Were the defenders correct in accepting declarer's concession? Yes, because there is no way of determining what declarer was going to do. Perhaps South would have cashed all the trumps, or led a spade before stripping the hand.

The moral of this story: Never raise the white flag until the battle is truly lost!

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PHILADELPHIA 2

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PLAZA

SEAN CONNERY...in

THE ROCK

(IN DOLBY STEREO)

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Johnson and Masterkova win athletics' top awards

MONACO (AFP) — American sprinter Michael Johnson and Russian middle-distance runner Svetlana Masterkova carried away international athletics' highest non-competition awards here on Friday evening.

The pair were presented with the International Athletic Foundation's (IAF) "Athletics Legends" prizes for 1996, awarded by foundation president Primo Nebiolo.

Johnson was honoured for winning gold at 200 metres and 400 metres at the Atlanta Olympic Games

— the 200m in a world record time of 19.32 seconds.

Masterkova gained her award for winning the 800 metres and 1500 metres at Atlanta and for setting two world records on the IAAF Grand Prix circuit.

The Russian clocked 4min 12.56sec in the mile and 2min 28.98sec in the 1000 metres.

Winners in the "best performance" category were Donovan Bailey of Canada and France's Marie-Josée Perec.

Bailey was honoured for becoming the fastest

man in athletic history by winning the Olympic 100 metres gold in 9.84sec — a world record.

Perec won the 200 and 400 metres at Atlanta.

Among the other star athletes recognised in the gala presentation here were American Dennis Mitchell, Jamaica's Merlene Ottey and Michelle Freeman and Great Britain's Jonathon Edwards, who were deemed outstanding during the 1996 IAAF Grand Prix.

Special prizes were also given to athletes who assisted in the humanitarian aid events for Sarajevo.

Germans dominate but Friday snowed out

VAL D'ISERE, France (AP) — After nearly perfect conditions the day before, heavy snow cancelled a women's giant slalom and a men's downhill training Friday.

More than a half-metre of snow fell Friday morning. The women were in position to race but the preliminary racers complained of snow accumulating on their goggles affecting visibility.

With heavy snow predicted throughout the day, the jury decided to cancel the race with no chance to reschedule it in Val d'Isere. There are men's races scheduled Saturday and Sunday.

A men's downhill training was also cancelled.

According to the organisers, the race jury will check the track Saturday morning, and decide whether a full downhill can be run or a sprint downhill with two shorter legs with a combined time determining the winner.

Last year Luc Alphand of France won the Val d'Isere downhill with a combined time.

The women's giant slalom may be run as part of the programme at Bad Kleinkirch, Austria, Jan. 11-12, or Zwiisel, Germany, Jan. 18-19.

In Thursday's race, Hilde Gerg continued the German domination in the women's World Cup as she led a 1-2-5 finish for her country, taking the women's super-G over defending overall and super-G World Cup winner Katja Seizinger.

Martina Ertl was in fifth and gets a chance to win her specialty in Friday's giant slalom. Ertl was the World Cup GS winner last year but was injured in October allowing Seizinger and Gerg to go 1-3 in the season opening GS at Soelden, Austria.

"We have the luck to have one of the best in the world in nearly every discipline and that makes it tough in training," Seizinger said of the German success.

Seizinger already has two victories this year and has been in the top three in five of the eight races this season already.

"I have been in good form so far this season," Seizinger said. "But it is too early to tell."

Gerg deprived Seizinger of another Val d'Isere victory as Gerg timed 1 minute 7.81 seconds on the Oreiller-Killy track with a length of 1,596 metres with a drop of 510 metres through 30 gates.

It was Gerg's second World Cup victory but she had shown good form this season with a second and fourth in two previous super-GS.

Seizinger, who won three races in three days here last February, was second with 1:08.20 ahead of Italian Isolde Kostner, 1:08.38.

Seizinger is also a heavy favourite in the downhill after the injury to Piccabo Street, who beat her the last two years.

Braun rules out Beckenbauer for FIFA president

BONN (R) — German Football Federation President Egidius Braun has dismissed the idea of Bayern Munich President and World Cup winner Franz Beckenbauer becoming FIFA president.

Europe's football federations had one candidate and that was UEFA President Lennart Johansson, Braun told Friday's Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper.

"Our candidate is Johansson. Europe's federations and I personally stand behind him. I can't suddenly start wriggling like an eel. But it is an honour to (Beckenbauer) to be brought into the discussion," Braun was quoted as saying.

Joao Havelange, 80-year-old Brazilian president of FIFA, said last Saturday he would retire after the 1998 World Cup finals.

Beckenbauer is among three Europeans tipped as potential candidates for the job, along with FIFA General-Secretary Sepp Blatter and Johansson.

"We in the European federations have said that after Havelange retires, we want to use the chance to take over the leadership role which corresponds to the importance of Europe in world football," Braun said.

"If we hadn't made clear statements in favour of Johansson, and if I knew Franz wanted the position, then I would use all the means possible to support him."

But Braun said he had heard Beckenbauer's name mentioned in Germany by only one person, an advisor to Beckenbauer.

Beckenbauer has already said he will quit as Bayern president next year but has still to announce what he will do next. He has said he would not rule out becoming FIFA president.

Rockets continue their winning streak

NBA ROUNDUP



Milwaukee Bucks center Armon Gilliam grabs an offensive rebound in the first quarter at the Bradley Center in Milwaukee December 12. Seattle Supersonics Hersey Hawkins (middle) and Larry Stewart defend with Bucks Glenn Robinson (left) and Vin Baker looking on (Reuters photo)

HOUSTON (R) — Charles Barkley scored 11 of his 26 points in the first 6:24 of the game as the Houston Rockets raced to a 15-point lead and breezed to their ninth straight home win, 115-96 over the Detroit Pistons Thursday.

Clyde Drexler scored 27 points, Hakeem Olajuwon added 21 and rookie Matt Maloney contributed 10 for Houston, which improved the league's best record to 19-2. Barkley grabbed eight rebounds and Drexler handed out eight assists for the Rockets, who have won four in a row and 13 of their last 14 games.

"The Pistons like to get into a playoff-type game where every possession is big," said Rockets' coach Rudy Tomjanovich. "They could not get into their tempo tonight."

In Los Angeles, Loy Vaught led six players in double figures with 16 points, including a key basket with 27 seconds left, helping the Los Angeles Clippers snap a four-game losing streak with a 97-94 victory over the hapless San Antonio Spurs.

Rodney Rogers also scored 16 points and Malik Sealy added 14 for the Clippers, who won for the just the second time in 12 games.

In Milwaukee, Glenn Robinson returned from an injury and had 32 points, nine rebounds and seven assists and the Milwaukee Bucks used clutch free-throw shooting down the stretch to hold off the Seattle Supersonics, 100-97.

Ray Allen had 17 points and Vin Baker 16 as the Bucks won for the third time in their last four games. Gary Payton matched his season high with 31 points for Seattle.

In New York, Allan Houston scored 18 points and Patrick Ewing added 13 points, a season-high 20

rebounds and blocked four shots as the New York Knicks extended their season-best winning streak to five games with a 90-79 defeat of the Golden State Warriors.

Larry Johnson had 14 points and John Starks added 13 off the bench for the Knicks. The Knicks grabbed a season-high 61 rebounds, including 23 on the offensive end.

Lutrell Sprewell led Golden State with 17

points.

In Portland, Kenny Anderson scored 16 of his 22 points in the first half as the Portland Trail Blazers raced to an 11-point lead and dealt the Vancouver Grizzlies their eighth loss in nine games, 99-78.

Clifford Robinson added 17 points and Rasheed Wallace had 14 points and 13 rebounds for Portland, which has won three of its last four games and nine of 13.

At Utah, Sam Cassell

scored 14 of his 21 points in the decisive fourth quarter as the Phoenix Suns upset the Utah Jazz, 95-87, ending their franchise-record 15-game winning streak.

After opening the season with 13 straight losses, Phoenix has won six of its last seven games and five in a row.

Kevin Johnson had 17 points and Rex Chapman had 16 off the bench for Phoenix.

points.

In Sacramento, Mitch Richmond scored 24 points. Mahmoud Abdul Rauf added 22 and both combined for six free throws in the final minute, leading the Sacramento Kings to a 93-86 triumph over the Dallas Mavericks.

Olden Polynice had 12 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings. Chris Gatling scored 14 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter for Dallas.

At Utah, Sam Cassell

Christie set to delay retirement

LONDON (AFP) — Linford Christie could shelve his retirement plans and challenge his old rival and close friend Frankie Fredericks at an indoor meeting in France next February, it was reported here on Friday.

The former 100m Olympic champion said he would never race again on the international stage, but organisers of the meeting in Lievin said the 36-year-old Christie has asked to run in two races — the 60m and 200m.

Philippe Lamblin, the liaison officer for international athletics at Lievin, told the Daily Telegraph: "There have been discussions with Sue Barrett (Christie's agent). He wants to run the 60m and 200m. Fredericks has

asked for a 200m to be included in the programme in order to try and break the world record again. "Linford and Frankie are very good friends and I think they have discussed the possibility."

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OIC foreign ministers end Jakarta talks accusing Israel of being hostile to peace

JAKARTA (AFP) — Foreign ministers from Islamic countries issued a new condemnation of Israel on Friday at the close of an annual meeting dominated by Middle East issues.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting accused Israel of being "hostile to peace."

"The ministers... strongly condemned these (Israeli) policies which are aimed at undermining the peace process... and eliminating its very principles," said a resolution issued on Friday.

The meeting denounced what it called threats by Israeli officials "aimed at taking the (Middle East) region back to a state of war and imposing a fait accompli on the Arabs and Muslims."

"We have vigorously addressed the impasse in the Middle East peace process," said Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas at the close of the five-day conference.

Indonesia and Malaysia had been backers of an initiative to put more emphasis on trade and investment between the 54 OIC members.

Although Mr. Alatas said there was "broad consensus" for a new economic impetus, delegates said Arab countries feared a new trade focus could push Palestine off the world agenda.



The outgoing secretary-general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Hamid Algabid (right) of Nigeria, and the newly elected Secretary-General Azzedine Laraki (left), former prime minister of Morocco, chat with other OIC delegates on the last day of a week-long conference in Jakarta on Friday (Reuters photo)

The Palestinians used the occasion to call for an economic embargo against Israel, with their top representative, Farouk Kaddoumi, urging Muslim countries to take "substantive, tangible measures" such as cutting trade ties with Israel and freezing normalisation of relations.

The meeting, which did not release a final communiqué to the media, issued a strong statement on terrorism and defended the international

image of Islam. "We feel that there should be a clearer awareness (of the difference) between senseless international terrorism and the struggle of people to achieve their independence," Mr. Alatas told AFP.

"If in the course of struggle for independence people are killed, shot at or bombs are thrown, it's different (from) this senseless terrorism which puts a bomb in an airport or on a plane," he said. Mr. Alatas said terrorism

and violence were too often equated in Western countries with Islam.

"Don't equate Islam with violence because radicalism exists in every country... and every religion," he said.

The meeting promised to support the reconstruction of the Muslim-dominated southern Philippines but failed to offer any concrete proposals.

The governor of the Muslim autonomous region in the southern Philippines,

Nur Misuari, said he was not disappointed that the OIC had failed to make specific funding pledges.

"I am familiar with the way they do things here. I have no cause to be disappointed... I don't want to go any further because they are still deciding," Mr. Misuari said.

The Afghan conflict received high billing, with the ministers calling for an "intra-Afghan mechanism" to solve the conflict between the warring factions. However, despite intensive lobbying, both the Taliban militia and Rabbani government delegates failed to receive OIC backing, with the Afghan seat remaining vacant throughout the conference.

A group of 20 black-clad women activists protesting the poor treatment of female migrant workers in OIC member states was prevented by police from demonstrating Friday in front of the OIC meeting place.

The ministers elected former Moroccan Prime Minister Azzedine Laraki to replace Niger's Hamid Algabid as the group's new secretary general. Surinam was welcomed into the OIC as the group's 54th member this week.

The next ministerial meeting is to be held in Qatar's capital, Doha, in March 1998.

Egypt to boost role in peace process in defiance of Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt will step up its role in the Middle East peace process in defiance of Israeli efforts to narrow its involvement in the deadlocked Palestinian track, Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Friday.

"The role of Egypt will continue and expand so as to ensure the positions are balanced between the Palestinians and Israelis and that the Palestinian side has a fair deal," he told reporters.

Mr. Musa condemned "negative statements" from Israeli officials such as Foreign Minister David Levy.

Mr. Levy on Thursday ruled out an active role for Egypt in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on Israel's long-delayed withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron.

"An Egyptian involvement in the peace negotiations... at a time when we have not sealed an accord with (Palestinian leader) Yasser Arafat, can only complicate the talks and set a precedent for the future," Mr. Levy said.

The foreign minister, quoted by Israeli newspapers, proposed "finding a way for Egypt to be able to help the negotiations without becoming an active partner as such."

"It seems Israel's condition for our taking part in the peace process is to put pressure on the Palestinians to accept conditions that are against their interest," Mr. Musa was quoted as saying by the official Middle East News Agency on Friday.

Israel sent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policy adviser Dore Gold to Cairo because "we did not want a meeting at the ministerial level so as not to allow things to get out of our control," said Mr. Levy.

The Jewish state has turned down a shuttle mission by Mr. Musa.

The Egyptian foreign minister on Friday also ruled out any meetings or visits by top officials from the two countries until Israel adopts "a balanced

position."

Cairo newspapers, meanwhile, said Egypt would not bow to Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu "and his clique thought they could blackmail and put pressure on Egypt" to accept their terms for involvement in the peace process, said the daily Al Akhbar.

It said Israeli leaders were "resorting to comic manoeuvres, which verge on playing with fire, to force Egypt to convince the Palestinians to accept Israel's aggressive point of view."

The government daily Al Ahras said Egypt would not allow Israel "to turn the clocks back" and unwind the peace process.

On a damage limitation mission, Mr. Gold on Thursday expressed Israel's "appreciation" of Egypt's role in the peace process, after meeting a Foreign Ministry official in Cairo.

"Consultations with Egypt have begun and they are continuing," Mr. Gold said. "We appreciate the assistance of Egypt in bringing about understanding between the parties."

Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh said Wednesday that Israel welcomed Mr. Musa if he would help "influence" the Palestinians. However, he said, Israel preferred to maintain direct talks with the Palestinians with no third parties involved.

He accused Mr. Musa of urging the Palestinians to adopt harsher positions. But President Hosni Mubarak said on Wednesday that Egypt, the first Arab state to make peace with Israel in 1979, was "the cornerstone of the peace process."

"Let them show us what they can do without Egypt," he said angrily.

U.S.-mediated negotiations on the long-delayed withdrawal from Hebron, under 1995 autonomy accords, have dragged on for more than nine months with each side accusing the other of blocking agreement.

Hamas holds Gaza rally, vows to avenge slain bomb-maker

KHAN YUNIS (Agencies) — Thousands of supporters of the hardline movement Hamas gathered Friday in memory of "the engineer" — master bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash slain a year ago by suspected Israeli agents.

Some 7,000 people took part in the rally at this Gaza refugee camp, held with the permission of Yasser Arafat's self-rule government, as Hamas vowed to avenge Ayyash's assassination and pursue the armed struggle against Israel.

"Our reaction to the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, on the first anniversary of this crime, will be severe and painful," Hamas said in a statement faxed to news organisations.

"We will deal a severe blow to the Zionist state and its army," said Hamas, acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. "Our strategic choice remains holy war and armed resistance."

Explaining the absence of major Hamas attacks on Israel since the group carried out three suicide bombings in February and March that killed 45 people, the group said its armed wing "has been undergoing a period of preparation and renewal of its fighting units which were hurt by the reprisals of the Zionist state and its collaborators."

This was a reference to a vast crackdown against militants launched by both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) since the bombings.

Hundreds of Hamas activists were arrested but most of those held by the Palestinians have since been released.

Friday's rally was organised to mark both Ayyash's slaying on Jan. 5 of this year and the ninth anniversary of the group's creation on Dec. 14, 1987, at the start of the intifada against Israeli occupation.

Ayyash, known as "the engineer" for his bomb-making skills, was killed by a booby-trapped cellular telephone which blew up in his face when he answered a phone call, presumably from Israeli agents.

Israel had accused Ayyash of organising a spate of Hamas suicide bombings which killed dozens of people. Israel was presumed responsible for his slaying, although the government never formally confirmed its role.

"We are raising our voice against anyone who says that Hamas has lost its power," Mahmoud Zabar, a senior political official of the group, said in the sprawling refugee camp of Khan Yunis.

"We are not here to fight the Palestinian (National) Authority but we are here to fight the Israelis," he told journalists. "Military operations are a horse that we can ride whenever we want. Operations are a method and not an aim."

Hamas, committed to creating a

Palestinian Islamic state in all of what is today Israel and the Palestinian territories, is violently opposed to the autonomy agreements signed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel.

Hamas represents the biggest opposition movement in the territories to the PNA, although Mr. Arafat has been seeking in recent months to reach a reconciliation with the group.

Friday's demonstration marked the first time the PNA has formally authorised such a Hamas rally.

Israel, meanwhile, stepped up security measures to prevent Hamas from trying to carry out an attack to coincide with the anniversary commemorations, Israel Radio reported.

Security officials told the radio police were restricting traffic and parking around shalom tower, Tel Aviv's biggest skyscraper and a feared potential target of car bombers.

Border guards also stepped up patrols and checks along the "green line" separating Israel and the Palestinian territories, and police used roving roadblocks for random checks on motorists inside Israel, it said.

Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani told the radio that the security alert was ordered as a precautionary measure and not due to any specific threats of planned militant attacks.

PFLP pledges more attacks

In Damascus, another hardline Palestinian leader on Friday pledged more attacks on Israelis and urged Palestinians to launch a fresh uprising against the Jewish state.

George Habash, the 71-year-old leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), also said a new political alliance would be formed in the West Bank and Gaza very soon to wreck the Palestinian-Israeli peace deal.

On Thursday the PFLP, which has strong support in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, claimed responsibility for Wednesday's killing of a Jewish settler and her 12-year-old son in the West Bank.

Mr. Habash's remarks were contained in a speech he was to deliver later on Friday at a rally in the Palestinian Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus on the 29th anniversary of the group's founding. A copy of his speech was obtained by Reuters.

"We pledge to our martyrs that we will continue our operations and military struggle against Israel until we succeed in establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Mr. Habash said.

His group has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against Israelis in Israel and South Lebanon in recent years.

Peace Now postpones Ras Al Amud protest after Ramallah attack

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — With tensions running high after the killing of two Jewish settlers, organisers cancelled a planned protest Friday over Israel's decision to build Jewish homes in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem.

"We felt that the climate was not right for the demonstration," said Amir Goldblum, a spokesman for the Israeli anti-settlement movement Peace Now.

Mr. Goldblum said the rally to oppose construction of some 130 Jewish homes in the Ras Al Amud neighbourhood of Arab East Jerusalem would be held at a later date that is still to be decided.

The decision to postpone the protest came after suspected Palestinian suicide bomber dead an Israeli mother and son and wounded five other members of the family Wednesday in an attack near the West Bank settlement of Beit Al.

The attack infuriated the Israeli settler movement and prompted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to vow that his government would step up its support for Jewish settlement in all the "historic lands" of Israel.

The interior ministry's planning commission approved on Tuesday the plan to build a Jewish quarter inside the Ras Al Amud neighbourhood where 11,000 Palestinians live.

They would be the first homes built explicitly for Jews in the middle of East Jerusalem.

Palestinian leaders have warned that if implemented, the project would spark violence that could be comparable to that which erupted in September after Israel opened a new entrance into an archaeological tunnel near Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

Palestinian protests over the tunnel turned into the worst fighting between Israelis and Palestinians since 1967, claiming 86 lives.

The commission decision must still be signed into law but the minister charged with ruling on the matter, Eli Yishai of the ultra-orthodox Shas Party, has said he will consult with Mr. Netanyahu before making a decision.

Press reports Wednesday said U.S. officials had

asked Mr. Netanyahu to refrain from approving the plan immediately so as not to worsen the crisis gripping the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Jewish settler whose wife and son were killed Wednesday told a senior U.S. diplomat Friday that the Clinton administration should not force Israel to make more "concessions" to the Palestinians.

"Tell Mr. Clinton it is important... not to pressure Mr. Netanyahu to redeploy in Hebron, to turn over land to Yasser Arafat," the settler, Yoel Tzur, told U.S. Consul General Edward Abington, who had visited the Beit Al settlement north of Jerusalem to express his condolences.

"Yasser Arafat is a liar and a deceiver," Mr. Tzur told Mr. Abington, who is the chief liaison between the U.S. government and the Palestinian National Authority.

Mr. Abington was careful to steer clear of politics, saying only he had come to convey his government's strong condemnation of violence and support for continuing Mideast peace efforts.

He later told reporters that Wednesday's shooting only strengthened his belief that peace talks must continue. "I spent 26 years in the Middle East working on the peace process. I've seen many, many violent acts in this part of the world. I believe with all my heart that the peace process is the only way to bring peace for all the peoples of the region."

Israeli troops enforce a closure of Ramallah for a third day Friday, barring Palestinians from leaving and entering.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a PLO faction opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy agreements, has claimed responsibility for Wednesday's attack.

Mr. Abington has paid condolence visits in the past. Last month, he visited the family of an 11-year-old Palestinian boy who was beaten to death. A Jewish settler has been charged in the killing.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. condemns rights violations in Iran

AMMAN (J.T.) — The 52nd session of the General Assembly in New York has voted 79 to 30 in favour of the United Nations 39th resolution condemning "continuing violations of human rights" in Iran, including "the high number of executions," torture, "restrictions on the freedom of expressing, thought, opinion and the press," "widespread discrimination against women," "significant toughening of criminal legislation," and the "harassment and persecution" of "writers and members of the press" in Iran. The U.N. General Assembly deplored "the continuing politically-motivated violence against 'Iranians' outside Iran and called on the mullahs' regime 'to refrain from activities against members of the Iranian opposition living abroad and the harassment of their relatives within Iran,'" the National Council of Resistance of Iran said in a press release.

Turkey: Protection force to be replaced

ANKARA (AFP) — The multinational force set up to protect Iraqi Kurds from Baghdad's troops will come to an end on Dec. 31 and be replaced by an air surveillance mission, Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan said. "Iraq's respect or not of the U.N. resolutions will be monitored by an aerial force. The mandate of the multinational force is at an end," Mr. Erbakan said at the start of a cabinet meeting. The U.S.-led operation provide comfort was created after the Gulf war in 1991 to protect northern Iraqi Kurds who fled to the Turkish border en masse to flee attacks by troops loyal to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Under the operation, U.S., British and French aircraft have been staging military surveillance missions over northern Iraq from Incirlik and Diyarbakir air bases in southern Turkey. Turkey, which spearheaded efforts for the mission's creation at the time, later complained that the force was acting beyond Ankara's control.

Syrian beheaded for 'witchcraft' in S. Arabia

RIYADH (AP) — A Syrian man was beheaded Friday for practicing witchcraft, an Interior Ministry statement said. It said Abdul Karim Marei Nashqabandi was executed in the Saudi capital of Riyadh after he was found guilty of practicing witchcraft and possessing polytheistic books. Under Saudi Arabia's strict Islamic law, witchcraft carries the death penalty. Nashqabandi's execution brings to 66 the number of people beheaded in Saudi Arabia. Most were executed for murder, rape or drug trafficking. A total of 192 people were beheaded in 1995. It's not known how many people have been executed for practicing witchcraft.

COLUMN 8

More than 300 may benefit from \$9 million will

SINGAPORE (R) — More than 300 people may benefit from the Singapore dollars (\$9.3 million) estate of a Singaporean businessman who died more than 70 years ago, the Straits Times newspaper reported. The newspaper said that when Seah Liang Seah died in 1925, his will stipulated that his assets could not be distributed until 21 years after the death of the last surviving child of the then king of England, George the Fifth. This was the duke of Gloucester, who died in 1974. The contents of the will are not what is being argued about in court. The problem is, who are the beneficiaries? Seah is estimated to have more than 300 descendants. For example, Singapore's high court must rule whether the beneficiaries include adopted or illegitimate children, or those who have been made bankrupt.

Woman, 86, spends night in dark bank vault

TACOMA (R) — An 86-year-old woman who stopped by the bank to check her safety deposit box spent a night in the vault when employees forgot about her. Doris Willis of Tacoma entered the vault at the downtown branch of Washington Mutual Bank shortly before 4 p.m. and was still there at 6 p.m. When a security guard locked the facility, police, contacted by a worried neighbour, were preparing to mobilise a search team when guards reopened the vault Thursday at 9 a.m. and Willis was discovered sitting in a chair. "It was darker than hades in there," Willis told local radio. "I finally found the phone, but I didn't know how to work the damn phone they had there." She said her biggest concern during the night had been that her nephew would be concerned about her safety.

Detective jailed for faking satanic attack

WELLINGTON (R) — A New Zealand fraud squad detective was sentenced to five years' jail after admitting faking a satanic attack on himself and burning down his own home to make a false insurance claim. Brent Garner, 32, a former detective in the north island town of Ashurst, was sentenced in the Palmerston north district court. He had faced a possible term of up to 14 years. The case was originally reported as a horrendous assault on Garner bearing hallmarks of a satanic cult. Garner, who claimed a miraculous escape, helped police compile a photofit picture of the supposed assailant. In fact, Garner on Oct. 18 spread petrol throughout his home and cut his back with a scalpel. He set a timing device, threw petrol over himself, tied a gag over his mouth and tied himself up. After the house was engulfed in fire, Garner was found nearby, bound and gagged, with multiple injuries. After 37 days of investigation, Garner admitted he had staged the whole affair. He planned to separate from his wife and said he wanted to give his family a good financial start.

Argentine province plans mass wedding

BUENOS AIRES (R) — An Argentine province is preparing to hold a mass wedding of 468 couples to promote family values. The Roman Catholic wedding, involving some couples who have already had children, will be held on Saturday in a former army base in Buenos Aires province. Announcing the event, the municipality of La Matanza said the mass wedding was part of a programme intended "to strengthen the family as the basis of values and human and social rights."